TITLE OF THE INVESTIGATION:

"An investigation into attitudinal responses of Years Nine, Ten and Eleven students towards the Programmes of Study of the Modern Foreign Languages National Curriculum in three West Essex 11-16 LM Comprehensive Schools".

A thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy.

Stephen P Levy –Thaw BA (Hons)

School of Lifelong Learning and Education

July, 2002

ABSTRACT

Questions which prompted interest in this area of research in 1988

Has the introduction of the National Curriculum with its concomitant statutory requirements made any measurable difference to students' responses to MFL classroom activities? If so, then in what way and to what extent might MFL study be now more (or less) appealing to more able 13-15 year-old students in local 11-16 LM Comprehensives?

The last large-scale attempt to explore pupils' views on MFL classroom activities was in 1985, as part of the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) surveys in Secondary Schools. There has been no attempt using the techniques of applied research to investigate pupils' views since the introduction of GCSE or indeed the National Curriculum. Despite this the research of Chambers, Clarke and Stables and Wikeley in the 1990s provided significant insight into the health of the subject at secondary level. Many of the concerns raised in these works are echoed in action research based in local schools in West Essex-in particular, the impact of target language teaching, the question of relevancy and the declining popularity of Languages.

The research aims to record students' responses to the PoS and to find possible reasons for these constructs. The results will be compared with other findings including those of the APU from 1985. Using the Programme of Study as a means of measurement seems a worthwhile starting point. This statutory requirement of the National Curriculum forms a blueprint for MFL teaching and learning and could constitute the framework of an investigation into student responses to MFL tasks and skills. Furthermore, teachers teach increasingly by consensus. Professionals should constantly seek to exploit better the preferred learning activities of their students; if MFL staff do not know what these are they need a working model to find out this information.

The research also makes use of APU questionnaires to assess the perceived enjoyment, usefulness and difficulty of MFL study as well as measuring the level of desired contact with other European students.

Findings of the investigation in 2000.

Many of the findings of this study may be said to report favourably on aspects of the PoS in MFL.
Among the more positive responses were:

- communicating with each other in pairs and groups, and with their teacher. This largely underlined the popularity of role-plays;
- developing understanding and skills through a range of language activities, e.g. games, role-play, surveys and other investigations discuss their own ideas. Discuss interests and experiences and compare them with those of others. Listen, read or view for personal interest and enjoyment, as well as for information This reflected the preference of many teenagers for exercising a degree of control in the pace and direction of the tasks set;
- listening and responding to different types of spoken language.. Skimming and scanning texts, including databases where appropriate, for information. This suggests that such exercises are popular for reasons that are likely to be related to pace of work;
- using a range of resources for communicating, e.g. telephone, electronic mail, fax, letters;
- redrafting writing to improve its accuracy and presentation, e.g. by word-processing. Using dictionaries and reference materials. Students are not always comfortable with the seemingly random nature of language and welcome quick methods of eliminating doubt and establishing accuracy;
- Express agreement, disagreement, personal feeling and opinions. Learning by heart phrases and short extracts, e.g. rhymes, poems, songs, jokes, tongue twisters. Pupils enjoy such activities but are critical when the material is unappealing.

However, many of the findings indicated less positive experiences of the students in MFL. These included:

- A significantly low level of perceived enjoyment in MFL study among average and more able students in all three schools in the study falling from an already low base in Year 9 to lower levels in Year 10 and Year 11;

- This experience is often more pronounced in MFL than in other GCSE subjects;
- A reluctance to use the target language as a means of communication. Elements of the PoS most strongly connected to this finding were: using language for real purposes, as well as to practise skills, using everyday classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech, initiating and developing conversations, developing strategies for dealing with the unpredictable, producing a variety of types of writing, asking about meanings, seek clarification or repetition in the TL.
- Teachers do not always accurately assess the popularity or unpopularity of MFL classroom tasks;
- Definitions of difficulty are often determined by levels of motivation;
- The desire for contact with the target language community is minimal and there are low levels of integrative motivation in all three schools;
- Ethnocentricity does not appear to contribute to this;
- Comparisons with 1985 APU findings indicate a far more negative outlook for MFL study in some West Essex schools with virtually no interest in post 16 MFL study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following friends, colleagues and acquaintances are acknowledged for the contributions they have made to this research.

The MFL staff of Schools 1, 2 and 3 for the co-operation and patience extended to me during the three years of data collection for this work. I would especially like to thank Eileen Neil (Brays Grove, Harlow) and Traute Cookson (ret.), Gareth Roberts (Hockerill Anglo-European School, Bishops Stortford), Peter Brown (John Warner, Hoddesdon), Melanie Watson (Newport Free Grammar, Newport) and Ahmed Seedat (Kingsmore) but especially all their students.

Dr. Roger Winter (Billericay School).

The staff at the Centre for Information and Language Teaching (CILT) and the School of Education Library, Cambridge.

Richard Christy (Business School, Portsmouth Univ.).

The West Essex Action Research Group (WEAR) and Paul Burton (Essex Advisory and Inspection Service). The Middlesex support team of Peter Hammond, Terry Russell and Val Halstead.

LIST OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Aims of the investigation 12

1.2 DfES "Green Paper", Spring 2002. 12

1.3 "Languages for All". 13

CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK and LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1 History of this study. 15

2.2 The view from the staffroom. 15

2.3 The students' view and Identification of problem. 17

2.4 What problem? 19

2.5 Key issues in formulating the Research Question. 19

2.6 The Nuffield Languages Inquiry and the MFL under-developed research base. 23

2.7 Application of findings. 23

2.8 Literature review. 24

2.9 Summary of Assessment and Performance Unit (APU) Research, 1983-5. 28

2.10 What are attitudes and why seek to measure them? 29

2.11 Attitudes and behaviour. 32

2.12 Attempting to measure attitudes. 34

2.13 Attitudes and Motivation. 34

2.14 Changes to PoS 1999. 37

2.15 Research Ethics Statement. 38

CHAPTER 3. CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH and FIELD:

3.1 School contexts, schools' performance and other data. 39

3.2 Demise of School Exchanges since 1990. 43

3.3 Sample group data. 43

3.4 Definition of sample (1). 44

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY and RESEARCH TECHNIQUES:

4.1 The mode of interrogation and working hypothesis. 48

4.2 Measuring attitudes. 49

4.3 The study design and how it seeks to eliminate bias. 50

4.4 Qualitative and quantitative techniques in the measurement of attitudes. 52
4.5 Identifying bias in quantitative techniques used in small-scale studies. 53
4.6 Why qualitative techniques may be more appropriate to a local, school-based enquiry. 54
4.7 How this study aims to cross reference the data gathered. 54
4.8 Using interviews in school-based enquiries. 55
4.9 Measures taken to diminish bias in the structured interviews 57
4.10 Comparisons with APU 58
4.11 Data gathering process 62
4.12 Cross sectional study (1995-6) 84
4.13 Towards triangulation 85

CHAPTER 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

5.1 Data Analysis:

5.1.1 *Ques1* data: tracked changes and possible factors (School 1). 87
5.1.2 Summary of tracked change (all schools). 98
5.1.3 *Ques1*-Teacher perceptions of student responses. 98

5.2 Findings:

5.2.1 Definition of sample (2). 99
5.2.2 Perceived Enjoyment of MFL (Aim 2). 100
5.2.3 Summary of positive responses. 117
5.2.4 Commentary on positive responses. 118
5.2.5 Summary of negative responses. 125
5.2.6 Commentary on negative responses. 125
5.2.7 Perceived Usefulness of MFL. 129
5.2.8 Perceived Difficulty of MFL. 132
5.2.9 Contact with Europe and the Target Language Community. 136
5.2.10 Perceptions of MFL Staff. 141
5.2.11 Comparisons with APU Findings. 142

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS:

6.1 The working hypothesis. 147
6.2.1 Aim 2. 148
6.2.2 Student Confidence. 149
6.2.3 Perceived Enjoyment. 150
6.2.4 Perceived Usefulness. 154
6.2.5 Perceived Difficulty. 156
6.2.6 Contact with the target language community. 157
6.2.7 The issue of relevancy and the impact of the predominance of English. 158
6.3 Aim 3. 163
6.4 Aim 1. 164
6.5.1 Aim 4. 165
6.5.2 A satisfactory framework for measuring attitudes? 166
6.5.3 Caveats. 166
6.5.4 Teachers' Views. 170

CHAPTER 7. SOME PROPOSALS:

7.1 Low levels of learner confidence and enjoyment in language learning. 171
7.2 The reluctance to speak the TL in front of peers. 175
7.3 The unpopularity of the explicit teaching of grammar. 176
7.4 The lack of ICT provision in MFL learning. 177
7.5 Raising the profile and importance of Europe in the eyes of students. The perceived lack of importance of a language in career options. 177

BIBLIOGRAPHY: 180

APPENDICES: 184
National Curriculum Part 1-Programmes of Study (PoS) 1998, Sections 1-3 185

Data-gathering formats/templates:
Questionnaire 1 (*Ques1*) Pupil and Staff Response Grid 186
Questionnaire 2 (*Ques2*) 187

Questionnaire 3 (*Ques3*) 193
Structured Interviews Format 195

Results / Findings:

Questionnaire 1 (*Ques1*) Bar charts including staff responses-School 2 198
Questionnaire 1 (*Ques1*) tracked changes and possible factors (School 2) 203
Summary of changes-School 2 207
Questionnaire 1 (*Ques1*) Bar charts including staff responses-School 3 209
Questionnaire 1 (*Ques1*) tracked changes and possible factors (School 3) 214
Summary of changes-School 3 217
Questionnaire 2 (*Ques2*) results 218
Structured Interviews Results 223
Summary of *Ques1* pupils' positive and negative responses 226

Comparisons with previous research

1985 APU Attitude Questionnaire 227

LIST OF CONTENTS - TABLES

Table 1. Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms 11

Table 2. Number of students taking French, German and Spanish GCSE 1992-8 26

Table 3. Performance data of Schools 1-3, 2000. 40

Table 4. SEN data of Schools 1-3, 2000. 40

Table 5. Sample group data at KS3. 43

Table 6. Poles in continuum of MFL learning characteristics. 46-7

Table 7. Comparisons of mean percentage scores of positive responses (*Ques1*) with those of APU (1985) 61

Table 8. *Ques1* Student Response format 64

Table 9. *Ques2*-Student Questionnaire. 68-73

Table 10. *Ques2* -categories and scoring system. 76

Table 11. *Ques2* Results -classification criteria. 76

Table 12. *Ques3*-Student Questionnaire. 78-9

Table 13. Structured Interviews -format and schedule. 80-83

Tables 14a -14e. *Ques1* results graphs from School 1. 88-92

Table 14f. *Ques1* data: Tracked changes and possible factors in School 1. 94-6

Table 15. *Ques1* data: Summary of discernible change in School 1. 97

Table 16. Summary of tracked change (all schools) 98

Table 17. *Ques1*. Sections 1a and 1c 101

Table 18. *Ques1*. Sections 1b and 1e -communicating in the target language. 102

Table 19. *Ques1*. Section 2g –initiate and develop conversations. 104

Table 20. *Ques1*. Section 2i -use of tenses 106

Table 21. *Ques1*. Section 1j -writing exercises 107

Table 22a-22c. *Ques1B* Comparative grouped scores of Schools 1, 2 and 3 109

Table 23. *Ques2* Results-student reactions to school and MFL experience. 111

Table 24. *Ques2* Results-popularity of MFL measured against other subjects. 111

Table 25. *Ques3* Distribution of % scores of observed variables 113

Table 26. *Ques3* Perceived Enjoyment-distribution of scores with equivalent APU scores. 115

Table 27. *Ques1*-summary positive responses. 118

Table 28. *Ques1*-Summary of negative responses. 125

Table 29. *Ques3* Perceived usefulness of MFL –distribution with equivalent 130

1985 APU scores.
Table 30. *Ques2* Results-perceived importance of MFL. 131
Table 31. *Ques3* Results-reasons for learning a MFL. 132
Table 32. *Ques3* Perceived difficulty of MFL-distribution of scores and APU 1985 equivalent. 134
Table 33. *Ques2* Use of MFL by respondents. 135
Table 34. *Ques3* Distribution of scores for desirability of contact with the Target Language Community and equivalent from 1985 APU. 137
Table 35. *Ques2* Expressing a wish for contact with the Target Language Community. 138
Table 36. *Ques2* Student readiness to learn language of country visited and to work abroad. 139
Table 37. *Ques2* Countries visited by students and views of their people. 139
Table 38. *Ques2* Student perceptions of French/German/British people. 140
Table 39. Pupil neutral responses to classroom tasks. 144
Table 40. Student Attitudes to MFL tasks/activities-APU and PoS 145-6

LIST OF CONTENTS – FIGURES.

Fig.1. Summary of variables influencing pupil attitudes and motivation. 36
Fig. 2. Conceptualised variable of motivation in MFL learning (Dörnyei). 37

ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Actres	Action Research Project completed by the researcher at Institute of Education, Cambridge, 1995-6
APU	Assessment and Performance Unit
AT1	Attainment Target 1, Listening and Responding
AT1- 4	Attainment Targets 1-4
AT2	Speaking
AT3	Reading and Responding
AT4	Writing
BEI	British Education Index
BGS	School 1
CATs	Cognitive Ability Tests
CILT	Centre for Information on Language Teaching
DfE	Dept. for Education (1998)
DfEE	Dept. for Education and Employment (1999)
FL	Foreign Language
FLT	Foreign Language Teaching
Fr / Ger	French / German
FSM	Free School Meals
KS2	Key Stage 2 –The Primary Stage for 7-11 year olds
KS3	Key Stage 3-The first stage of secondary education .11-14 years
KS4	Key Stage 4. The second stage of secondary education. 14-16 years
MFL / ML	Modern Foreign Languages / Modern Languages
MHS	School 3
NC	National Curriculum
NLI	Nuffield Languages Inquiry Final Report, 2000
PoS	National Curriculum Programmes of Study
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
Ques1	Questionnaire 1
Ques2	Questionnaire 2
Ques3	Questionnaire 3
SAS	Standard Assessment Scores in CATs tests
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests taken at the end of Key Stage 3
STJ	School 2
T L	Target Language
VA	Value Added
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
WEAR	West Essex Action Research

Table 1. Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Aims of the investigation:

1. To record the responses of the more able Year 9 – 11 MFL students to Modern Foreign Languages using the National Curriculum Programmes of Study (PoS) in three West Essex 11-16 schools;

2. To investigate and identify which skills (as identified in the PoS) are preferred or disliked, to find possible reasons for these constructs and to draw conclusions from the responses to inform better the teaching and learning of MFL;

3. To consider comparisons with APU research of 1985 to indicate areas where student attitudes to MFL learning might have or might not have changed;

4. To propose a model for MFL staff to:

- record their students' responses to MFL study
- check their own perceptions of student responses and indicate areas where staff may inaccurately gauge levels of student interest.

1.2 DfES "Green Paper", Spring 2002

After the completion of this research and during the final editing stage prior to submission, the Education Minister, Estelle Morris, published the DfES "Green Paper" on government plans to enhance the provision of 14-19 education. The paper contains proposals only and is not primarily concerned with improvements to Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in secondary schools. However, the anticipated endorsement of the proposals expected in the autumn report is widely expected to bring far-reaching changes to MFL in 11-16 secondary schools.

The purpose of the changes is to provide a greater flexibility in the secondary diet in order to "create greater space in KS4 of the National Curriculum" (DfES Green Paper,

Spring, 2002, 3.8) and allow space for Citizenship, Careers and Sex Education in the curriculum. The statutory "core" elements of KS4 education will be reduced to Maths, English, Science and ICT. The intention is to enable students to make curriculum choices more appropriate to their needs. Inevitably, this will release students from previously compulsory subjects, notably MFL. Accordingly the proposals acknowledge that, whilst all schools should offer MFL in KS4, the suitability ("entitlement to access", op. cit. 3.17) is to be determined locally by the school rather than nationally by statute.

Significantly, the paper acknowledges that understanding of another language fosters community cohesion whilst emphasising the primacy of English as a global language (op. cit. 3.20). It further recognises the disaffection MFL study causes some pupils noting that the scale of disapplication could be as many as 36.000 (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority [QCA] monitoring, 2000-1) from KS4 Languages in Secondary Schools and intends to publish plans in the autumn to introduce Languages at Primary level to allow schools to focus on MFL provision in KS2-3 and "a more coherent 14-19 phase" (op. cit. 3.23).

Many of the issues identified and addressed by the "Green Paper" form the substance of this research. It is important to record at the outset that many of the difficulties faced by MFL students and teachers and researched here are now openly acknowledged by the DfES Green Paper and so many of the findings of this investigation are, to a certain extent, echoed in a public report available on the DfES web-site. There is a sense here of poor timing and a realisation that the results of a localised study may now form part of a bigger, national picture. This particularly applies to chapter 7.

1.3 "Languages for All"

This policy was initiated in 1992, but it was not until the Dearing revisions to the National Curriculum (DFE/WO, 1995) that requirements were put in place for all school students to learn a Modern Foreign Language (MFL) at both Key Stages Three and Four. For many Comprehensive Schools local to this study these changes represented little that was new. For some time West Essex schools had been slowly embracing attempts to make MFL more accessible to all students. Only the few dis-applied pupils could now expect to avoid the subject at secondary school. Now, in 2002 and over five

years later, the pupils who, aged 11, faced the "Languages for All" principles for the first time have just left 11-16 education (Summer, 2001).

For many of these students in the three schools, Languages would not have been an obvious choice at 14, if the subject had been offered as an option and MFL may or may not have been a successful or enriching experience. Other students might have willingly opted for one or more MFL courses, had the choice existed, or been encouraged to take a language to GCSE by KS3 success or by parents, friends or teachers. It is the experiences of this student that is investigated in this study.

What have their experiences been? Which particular elements of MFL study characterised the experience? The Nuffield Languages Inquiry (NLI) final report was published towards the latter stages of this survey and its impact is impossible to ignore. It lists a host of potential disadvantages for the MFL students of 2000-1 including a poor choice of languages, inflexible accreditation system, defects in curriculum organisation, below average GCSE exam results and poor foundations for future learning. Is this picture also true of West Essex? Or is the picture even less encouraging? The students from local schools may well add to the NLI list a greater perceived difficulty, peer pressure and embarrassment and less enjoyment and relevancy compared to other subjects.

CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1 History of this study

The last major attempt to explore pupils' views on MFL classroom activities was in 1985, as part of the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) surveys (1983-5) in secondary schools. There has been no national attempt using the techniques of applied research to investigate pupils' views since the introduction of GCSE or indeed the National Curriculum. Despite this, the current MFL teacher will recognise many of the teaching activities that feature in the APU studies. It may be that the responses researched in 1983-5 (and their effectiveness in MFL teaching-in terms of eliciting positive or negative pupil responses) might bear some fundamental resemblance to those of 1998-2001.

Participation in the APU applied research encouraged the researcher to study the findings at CILT from 1986 and to attend Further Professional Studies courses organised by the Cambridge Institute of Education in 1995-6. This led to an action research project in examining the responses of Year 9 and Ten classes in one school to the National Curriculum in MFL. The project was further developed and extended to three schools by a TTA funded research scheme in 1998 and was also accepted by Middlesex University in 1998 for registration as a MPhil research degree funded by the MEB bursary scheme.

2.2 The view from the staffroom.

The malaise described in the NLI Final Report that grips MFL study in many Comprehensive Schools is not only evident in the likely linguistic diet of its pupils. Many practising MFL Comprehensive School teachers privately express the view that the subject, in some state schools, has become the "Cinderella subject" of their day, perhaps, in much the same way as "Classics" was commonly regarded in the late 1970's Comprehensive. The somewhat fanciful term suggests a subject area that sits uncomfortably on the periphery of the curriculum, isolated to a degree by a reluctance or inability to change.

It is, of course, impossible to ascertain exactly what is represented by such anecdotal, colourful terms. It may be tempting to view MFL locally in a disproportionately negative way simply because the subject(s) have been less successful for a small but more vociferous group of disaffected students. Indeed, many adult learners can identify with this view and will recall less rewarding episodes from their own language learning days and conclude that nothing has really changed. Languages were ever thus. Yet, the informed, contemporary curriculum observer is often left with the image of a subject under the indefinable threat of inertia, unable by its very nature to change and perhaps unlikely to survive in some schools for much longer in its present 11-16 format in a time of National Curriculum revision.

Those seeking to justify this proposition highlight the steady pace of change and sometimes dramatic syllabus reforms of the 90's that enabled, for example, Humanities departments to embrace GNVQ (Travel and Tourism) and PE such courses as Leisure and Tourism and the concept of Sport GCSE. Many such changes have borrowed heavily from the post 16 FE sector and have proven immensely successful in some schools both in terms of examination results and popularity with successive cohorts of secondary students. At the same time many local schools (including those in this study) have invested more curriculum time in pastoral projects embracing a huge variety of topics as diverse as study skills, health education, driving skills, business enterprise and citizenship. Today's adult visitor to such classes may, in some cases, be hard pressed to identify the subject.

Curriculum reform, by contrast, in MFL has been rather more modest. Observers comment that there is a limit to the amount that can be changed in language learning and that an essential part will always require rote-learning-that perennially unpopular activity among MFL learners. A defined content by any other name would smell as foul. Furthermore there is a well-documented reluctance among teachers to embrace further reforms and initiatives after the educational seismic shifts of the 1990s. But what do the students themselves think? It is perhaps appropriate to summarise at the outset typical. anecdotal student responses to MFL study in Years 9-11.

2.3 The students' view and Identification of problem.

"It's boring, sir!" is a common cry among adolescent Year 10 learners. This is often delivered with an apology that will be familiar to many MFL teachers. "No offence meant to you, Sir/Miss, I know you want us to do well, and I enjoy ..... (insert here some fun, but essentially non-linguistic activity) but I just don't enjoy languages". This is often the implicit message conveyed in this and other similar outbursts of MFL learners at many levels of ability or success. MFL teachers in the three schools in this study will immediately recognise such comments from students of average or below average linguistic ability but will also acknowledge that they can also emanate from more able students. Moreover the comments are often voiced by the more responsible and mature pupils as well as the less responsible. These are often pupils with high expectations who enjoy success in other areas and are confused and frustrated by the slow rate of progress in languages. For staff working with such students the teaching becomes increasingly influenced by the readiness of the learner to engage in language learning activities and consequent levels of disaffection rather than methods of language teaching. It is the quality of the learner that now assumes a disproportionate importance in the assessment of success or failure. What the learner brings to the classroom and the learning equation can now offset the importance of linguistic ability. The learning profile of, for example, a lower set student might be more positive than that of the higher set counterpart, enable promotion to that higher set where s/he achieves better results despite the gap in potential when compared to the rest of the set. By Year 11 therefore students with distinctly modest GCSE predictions may reside in higher sets whilst the potentially more able with poor patterns of learning in MFL languish in lower sets.

This research seeks to investigate to what extent this picture is replicated within individual schools as well as in other local schools and how these views might develop from Year 9 and change as students get older.

So much for some common reactions of MFL students but, before the work begins to look at student responses in a more systematic way it is perhaps useful at this stage to examine other kinds of responses of students. The typical characteristic of many failing or struggling students might include the non-completion of homework or coursework, an expectation of failure engendering a reluctance to persevere with new work, non-

participation in or a failure to respond to class listening/speaking work. This might also include the able student in a higher set whose perception of progress is not so positive. Stradling *et al*, (1991) also noted a high level of dependency on the teacher, who would be expected at all times to provide a bolster to flagging motivation or simply to reassure continually the hesitant or disaffected pupil. An erratic record of attendance was also noted by this and other researchers. Other key factors that might render languages less popular for some pupils than their other subjects were recognised by Reisener (1992):

- Nature of MFL courses. Skill-orientated, often teacher-led, process rather than content specific
- Cyclical patterns rather than linear progression in teaching and learning. Modules and topics are not autonomous units but interdependent
- Intensity of practice (75-80% of lessons have activities designed to reinforce structures introduced) that has to be maintained to sustain progress
- Complexity (the phoneme-grapheme discrepancy)
- Levels of abstraction
- Lack of real need to express ideas in a foreign language that can be articulated in the mother tongue
- Long term rather than short term benefits
- Discrepancy between what a pupil wishes to say and is able to say causing inherent motor failure. The student can, irrespective of intentions, appreciate this gap in knowledge without even attempting the work and so experience de-motivation. This is especially relevant given the importance of target language teaching.

This attempt to describe what confronts teachers and students in local MFL classrooms needs to be investigated. On a wider front the final report of the NLI recognises that this classroom dynamic is part of a bigger under-researched field. This is discussed more fully below.

In conclusion, are Languages an ever fixèd mark in the school curriculum that, when juxtaposed with other subjects, appear intransigent and resistant to change? To what extent is this due to the very nature of the subject? Have the changes evident in other subjects changed the way students respond to languages? Moreover, what effect could the inability of a subject to change have on students in times of progressive KS4 curriculum revision? If there are high levels of disaffection experienced by many 13 -15

year-olds learning MFL then is this consistent across the ability range or simply more evident in less confident and less successful MFL students? Is it possible, in other words, to detect similar disaffection among more able learners?

2.4 What problem?

Is it a problem at all? Given the record of MFL learning in this country it may not necessarily be an insurmountable problem at all if local students share the negative view of Languages reported above (even if it may be morally reprehensible to allow this view to go unchallenged). Indeed many advisers to this project note that this view has changed little in recent years. Languages, they recall, were often unpopular subjects in their day, why should it be surprising that they remain so? Besides, compulsory KS4 MFL study has after all increased the numbers of students gaining GCSE in a language. Viewed statistically the National Curriculum has been a national success story with a steady rise in GCSE pass rates throughout the nineties (see below). It must therefore be concluded that significantly more young adults than ever before now leave full time education with a qualification in a foreign language even if the number has dropped somewhat since 1998. So where's the problem?

There is a further issue here. Pas devant les enfants! Why ask the students? Is it ultimately the responses of the students that might help influence MFL policy in any one school? Should it not rather be formulated by a National system underpinned by a tried and tested collection of language learning skills in the form of the PoS? Why in other words listen to the views of the customer at the point of delivery?
These issues are addressed in the next section.

2.5 Key issues in formulating the Research Question

In response to the above questions let us now consider some opposing views and other considerations. This research would seek to contend that an acceptance of the ideas outlined above would firstly compromise the notion of a National Curriculum. MFL study in Secondary Schools is defined by such a National Curriculum but if it can be seen that learning under such terms encourages a level of disaffection that threatens the integrity of the subject then it questions the viability of the national element of a

National Curriculum. Accepting the view that Languages have always been unpopular also conflicts with the APU findings of 1985 referred to later in this report.

The question of motivation is inextricably linked with success in Languages but "enjoyment", per se, is not ultimately crucial to language-learning. Indeed, the terms "problem", "disaffection", "(un)popular" and "enjoyment" are relative terms that need to be contextualised within a larger framework such as the aims of the National Curriculum. There are for example many instances of words and phrases successfully recalled years later by adults who were taught using relatively uninspiring inductive teaching methods. Adults often recall their school language lessons with horror but can still speak a language (usually French) effectively today. But other subjects have evolved and retained their appeal to students and so the issue for linguists, therefore, is whether the skills contained in the Programmes of Study enable teachers to encourage students and whether they are capable of facilitating perceived enjoyment in all students in the public sector. This is not just because this leads to more effective teaching and learning but also because there is a professional requirement of teachers to motivate students.

Why ask the pupils? Are teenagers the most reliable source of sensitive information; some clearly are not. However we cannot ignore the responses of the students we teach. Every aspect of sociological research along the interfaces of human relationships rests on a scrutiny of the recipient's behaviour. This is especially true of educational research and so it is all the more surprising that teachers do not know what pupils themselves nationally think of the MFL National Curriculum.
Furthermore, more than ever before teachers teach by consensus. Consideration of how their teaching is received is woven into the very fabric of what they do. The cyclical teaching pattern of presentation - practice - evaluation of response - re-presentation assumes a strategic importance in all schools but particularly, in those subjects where there is a need to practise and drill previously learned work. The pattern is also vital in schools or classes where languages are seen as challenging subjects. The duality of presentation-response requires many teachers to react more readily to students' learning needs-as expressed in their reactions to lessons and the implications for progression in learning and how this feeds back into lesson planning. It also behoves teachers to consider more systematic ways of measuring these responses to the way they teach.

Assumptions never tested can become misrepresentations of the true situation; close enough to assumed fact to escape closer scrutiny.

The issue of perceived enjoyment is crucial. Every teacher knows (and a wealth of research proves) that perceived success provides the spur to further progress in every school subject and that this is especially true of Foreign Languages. But can those same teachers identify those elements of the PoS that elicit enjoyment, disaffection or apathy? If teachers can identify activities that elicit or reinforce enjoyment or reluctance they can begin to consider effective strategies to exploit this knowledge. Employing alternative approaches when teaching that universally unpopular skill that could lessen disaffection in MFL. A sense of enjoyment is also an important issue for teachers in a time when the morale and retention of staff is continually in the headlines.

The research of Gardner and Lambert (1972) established that students learn MFL for two reasons. Either they learn because they find the learning useful or enjoyable. Instrumental and integrative motivation is examined more fully below. Attitudinal research into pupil responses will employ this tenet of language learning to assess levels of motivation evidenced in student attitudes in schools in this study.

Has the introduction of the National Curriculum with its concomitant statutory requirements made any difference to students' responses to MFL classroom activities? If so, then in what way and to what extent has it made MFL study more (or less) appealing to 13-16 year-old students? As stated above this is an under-researched area particular in "bog-standard " Comprehensives that are unlikely to seek Language College status.

These questions and the issue of motivation are particularly relevant when the "Languages for All" policy is being reassessed- particularly at Key Stage Four. School managers were quick to note the change signalled by the former Secretary of State in 1998 (Work-related Opportunities, TES, 10.7.98) and to take a fresh look at the "Languages for All" policy introduced with such optimism under Dearing. In all three schools in this study modifications have been made to National Curriculum MFL entitlement.

Why Years 9, 10 and 11? Year 9/10 is a watershed not just in that it separates two Key Stages. The options process begins in year 9 and the importance of the Year 9/10 divide is further emphasised by the prospect of new, previously un-encountered subjects in the post 14 pupils' diet. There is also the possibility in some schools of shortening MFL study in KS4. This is caused by a growing tendency to introduce limits on the numbers of students able to continue MFL to full GCSE examination.

Further, by Year 9 many students have often come to the end of the faster phase of MFL learning. The accelerated pace of study that may have characterised years 7-8 is slowing for many pupils. The notion of a linguistic "ceiling" is controversial but many staff see students peaking at Level 3+ or 4 in Year 9 and not getting any further. The demands required by the use of tenses in Level Five often renders progress to a more sophisticated use of language inaccessible to many. Further progress is often only possible at a much slower pace with an increase in effort levels. This is likely to continue to occur in many schools despite the 1998 changes to the National Curriculum level descriptors of Level Five.

Finally, why exclude less able pupils? There is much evidence in previous studies (principally that of Filmer-Sankey (1989), Stables and Wikeley (1997 & 1999) and Chambers (1993 & 1999) to suggest a decline in positive attitudes towards MFL study as pupils grow older. This is often taken for granted by many MFL teachers. It is therefore, perhaps, more pertinent in a smaller, more localised study, to look at the responses and attitudes of those students who have a better record and more positive learning experiences in languages at KS3 and for whom the question of declining attitudes is less well known. Clark and Trafford, (1995 & 1996) found that the most able were more inclined to recognise the value in learning a foreign language. Such students are important to schools and not least to the three schools in the study as they constitute part of a body of 13-16 year-olds that are better placed to improve the A*-C GCSE ratings in schools performing at below national averages. Not only are these pupils more able to tackle the challenges of Level 5 at Key Stage 3 and GCSE Higher level work, they are themselves the focus of school-based efforts to improve league tables ratings. If there is a "chronic decline" (Stables & Wikeley, 1999) in the popularity of Languages as students grow older it may be evident among more-able students as well.

2.6 The Nuffield Languages Inquiry and the MFL under-developed research base

The publication of the Nuffield Enquiry has sought to underline the importance of the state of language learning in the UK. Its findings have provoked criticisms and concerns including fears of the potential demise in schools of major European languages. These issues achieved prominence in the educational press during the course of this study. A full consideration of the impact of this report is beyond the scope of this work. Some issues, however, featured in the NLI (such as the views of UK Secondary School students towards Europeans and languages study) and are inextricably linked to pupil performance and therefore some of the findings of the NLI Final Report should feature in this study.

Why don't we know already what the current picture is concerning MFL in classrooms across the country? This may seem an obvious question but there is regrettably no single conclusive report - besides those of *Ofsted* and professional journals - that comments on the current state of the MFL National Curriculum in English and Welsh secondary schools. Other European countries, as close to home as Scotland, have taken more of a lead in this. The Assessment and Performance Unit set up to report on the state of MFL in schools and referred to later in this study was disbanded in the mid-1980's. The Nuffield Languages Inquiry identifies MFL study as having "an under-developed research base" and expresses a clear need for more teacher-conducted research and work on a host of language related topics including learner motivation.

> We believe there are significant gaps in the research infrastructure underpinning language teaching and learning in the UK, and significant gaps also in the knowledge base, which is needed if we are to formulate effective language policies, and develop and sustain an appropriate language capability. (CILT Advisory Group on Research. op. cit. NLI. 2000, p. 79).

2.7 Application of findings

Although it is impossible to predict the appeal of such a study, it is hoped the findings could inform further research into teaching and learning in local Comprehensive Schools or add to the findings of similar local studies that might occur in different parts of the country. (Searches made via the TTA, BEI and NFER databases revealed at

present no similar local research projects). The details of the work will be made available to other researchers via the CILT research database.

The involvement of three West Essex schools, the local educational research group led by the Essex Advisory Service (WEAR) in the outline planning stage, and the Cambridge Institute of Education in the early stages of this study may offer the possibility of a wider audience in addition to teachers in the participating schools, Middlesex University's trainee teachers and staff.

The last phase of the study aims to guide teaching strategies, which would help frame future Key Stage 3 and 4 MFL planning and therefore provide some immediate benefits for the participating schools. In particular, it is hoped the conclusions will be of benefit to Curriculum Leaders and other managers charged with the responsibility of improving school performance at KS3 and GCSE.

This study aims to suggest what teachers should do to improve teaching and learning in MFL classrooms and, as such, aims to satisfy the TTA criteria on educational research and avoid the criticisms of relevancy raised by Ofsted (Tooley and Darby, 1998).

2.8 Literature review

The link between success in languages and positive attitudes has always been apparent to researchers. Stern (1983) points out,

> Any language teacher - and for that matter any learner - can testify that language learning often involves strong positive or negative emotions. Moreover, learners declare their feelings and intentions with their feet when they opt for, or turn away from (sic), language classes. (p.35).

In examining the relationship between attitudes, motivation and performance Savignon (1972) emphasised the level of achievement, which produces a positive or negative attitude.

> High achievers tend to develop positive attitudes as they go along and lower achievers become increasingly disenchanted.

This view was supported by the results of a study of French in primary schools carried out by the NFER between 1964 and 1974. One of the project's aims was to "discover whether pupils' levels of achievement.. are significantly related to their attitude towards foreign language learning" (Burstall, Jamieson, Cohen and Hargreaves.1974. p.13). Although the conclusions of this controversial report have since been contested evidence was found to support the view that:

> early achievement ... affected later attitudes towards learning (and achievement).. to a significantly greater extent than earlier attitudes affected the subsequent development of either attitudes or achievement. (ibid. p.234-5).

However, the key research in this area remains the APU studies of 1983-5, which is examined in greater detail below. The absence of national applied research in this field since 1985 indicates a limited repertoire of literature in this field. However, the pioneering work of Gardner and Lambert (1966, 1968, 1972) into motivation in second language learning informs much of the research associated with this and other studies. In a ten year long study the two Canadians found that MFL success was dependent on the learners' predisposition towards the target linguistic-cultural group. The term *integrative motivation* was formed and described as " a high level of drive on the part of the individual to acquire the language of a valued second language community in order to facilitate communication with that group" (Gardner et al. 1976). This motive was described as more significant than a second, identified drive that was termed *instrumental motivation.* This described the more utilitarian benefits of language acquisition such as access to higher education, a better job or higher salary. Many subsequent studies confirmed these findings and they were further refined in the 1980s by Svanes (1987); Pierson, Fu & Lee, (1980); Oller, (1981) and Au (1988).

In a review of the more conflicting findings Clement and Kruidenier (1983) suggested four "orientations" to be common to all second language learning groups in a large-scale survey of Canadians. Students learned a second language to travel, to seek new friendships, to acquire knowledge and for instrumental purposes. McDonough (1981) and Graham (1984) both emphasised the motive in the integrative drive for closer contact with the foreign community even to the extent of acquiring psychological characteristics of the target group.

Within a wider curriculum context, O'Keefe and Stoll (1993) found in research into truancy that 14-15 year-old secondary school students truant to avoid particular lessons notably French, PE and RE. Reasons given for the dislike included lack of relevance, an absence of enjoyment and perceived difficulty.

This acknowledged bank of work should also include UK based research such as regional studies by Filmer-Sankey (1989), Stables and Wikeley (1997 & 1999) and Chambers empirical studies (1993 & 1999). These MFL based works all suggest a "decline in attitudes towards languages while the teaching of them has become more established within the curriculum for students of all abilities" (Stables and Wilkeley, 1999, p27). They regretfully report:

> Unfortunately, Modern Languages are not rated highly for their usefulness and are seen as among the least enjoyable subjects by many pupils, particularly boys. (op.cit. p28)

Whilst the number of students passing GCSE examinations in core and foundation subjects has continued to rise, statistical evidence from the DfEE shows a decline in the number of more recent entries for GCSE in the most common languages. The number of students taking French, German and Spanish GCSE rose steadily from 1991-1994. (Spanish rose by 40%, German by 22% and French by 4%). Numbers increased further from 1994 to 1995. Entries for 1996 and 1997, however, reveal a fall and only 3000 students were entered for Short Courses. The same pattern of declining entry numbers is evident at "A"-Level despite increased numbers of post 16 students. Evidently, schools have been eager to establish languages on the curriculum but more selective about which students sit the exams.

	1992	**1993**	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**
French	300,876	286,138	289,901	340,155	342,751	328,299	335,698
German	98,930	106,420	110,517	126,848	132,212	132,615	133,683
Spanish	29,245	31,949	36,415	40,591	42,592	43,826	47,269

Table 2. Number of students taking French, German and Spanish GCSE 1992-98 (DfEE statistics branch cited in Chambers, 1999, p3)

Research from the past cannot be said to reflect positive student views of languages. Certainly, in the1930s work by R A Pritchard, using a large sample from selective schools, showed French to be a popular subject for both boys and girls (Pritchard, 1935). But by the early 1970's, the subject was shown to have declined in status and popularity among higher ability GCE "O"-level candidates of both sexes (Milton Ormorod 1975).

French and Latin, in Duckworth and Entwistle's 1974 study of grammar school pupils, scored at or near the bottom of the scale used measuring the variables of interest, freedom and social benefit but high in terms of difficulty. Harvey and Stables (1984) showed that 13-14 year old comprehensive school, mixed-ability pupils (especially boys) found both French and German unpopular subjects in the options process.

In more recent, key research, Chambers (1993) and Clark (1995) canvassed both student and staff views for the decline in attitudes towards languages and reported a variety of factors ("psychological; attitudinal; social; historical; geographical") at work. Frequently, evidence gathered suggested a compounding of these factors. Although students were quite willing to acknowledge the importance of learning languages, only 10% were prepared to admit to taking pleasure in their learning. In those areas where students expressed an enjoyment of the work it was not always for sound educational reasons, e.g. the freedom to control the pace of learning offered by independent learning tasks such as role-playing.

Chambers distinguished between the de-motivated and the unmotivated (i.e. those who had or hadn't an initial sense of enthusiasm to retain or lose). His conclusions are that all language learners are different because de-motivation has many forms. Many are de-motivated by school generally and not just languages and the extrinsic motivation of a GCSE grade does not extend to all students because it lies too far in the future for many 13 or 14 year olds. He adds that teachers should tackle low-learner self-esteem.

Clark and Trafford (1995) also found that the most able recognised the value in learning a foreign language, but that most students of both genders perceived a language to GCSE to be difficult, and could not see relevance in the language learned. The conclusions include the need for more male MFL staff, that teachers should remember

the importance of the impact of personality on the student responses and that syllabuses should allow progression without undue repetition. Grouping was seen as a major issue with single-sex groups promoting the motivation of girls but not boys. The study, finally, underlined the importance of foreign travel for less privileged students as a means of increasing poor levels of integrative motivation.

2.9 Summary of Assessment and Performance Unit (APU) Research, 1983-5

This applied research included a section on pupils' attitudes to foreign language learning and provides key information and insight into pre National Curriculum Languages (and GCSE) for 13-14 year olds in secondary schools in the UK. Such a key piece of research should feature in any literature review.

A questionnaire was used for the investigation into attitudes towards language learning. This was administered to a sub-sample of 1500 students prior to taking the tests, so attitudes were not affected by poor performance at the language testing stage.
For the purposes of this study the information falls into two categories:

1) General attitudes to Foreign Language learning (French)

The questionnaire examined several areas including attitudinal responses towards homework, those who had visited France and gender differences. For the purposes of this research commentary is limited to the first section ("General Attitudes").

2) Attitudes to activities carried out in the classroom

The third section of the questionnaire attempted to find out which activities were more common in classrooms where French was taught and to elicit responses towards the activities. The activities were put into groups to make general statements. It was not always possible to make clear distinctions between some activities in terms of the four skills listening, speaking, reading and writing, as there is a mixed skill element to some relatively common tasks, (e.g. "answering the teacher's questions in French"). Pupils' responses to the activities were reported in terms of the percentage distribution of an array of broad areas ranging from "Like a lot" to "Dislike a lot". The figures recorded included gender differences and those who had visited France and those who had not.

The conclusions of the APU report of 1985 indicated that:

- More pupils considered MFL study useful, enjoyable and not difficult than pupils thinking the contrary;
- More wanted contact with the target language community than the contrary;
- Girls had a more positive outlook than boys;
- Those who had visited the target language community tended to have a more positive outlook

It was concluded that as the learning experiences of 13 year-olds appeared more positive than negative then MFL might have a far rosier future in Comprehensive Schools than previously thought.

2.10 What are attitudes and why seek to measure them?

This chapter began by suggesting that student attitudes and motivation can determine levels of MFL success. It is imperative therefore, even at this early stage and before the introduction of the chosen research techniques outlined in chapter 4, to examine the nature of attitudes and to attempt a working definition for the purposes of the investigation.

It is not always easy to define the term with any consistency as social scientists sometimes use the terms "attitudes", "values" and "beliefs" with some degree of overlap or even interchangeability. This very inconsistency of the concept of attitude has to some extent explained its popularity as a notion employed in educational research. Each researcher has been able to use the term in a variety of laboratory and field observations according to a range of definitions. Each researcher has typically defined the term within the contexts of the work undertaken. As Lemon (1973) remarks,

> It ("attitude") can be applied at many different levels of analysis. It can, for example, be used to characterize the behaviour of a single individual in a carefully controlled laboratory situation, and yet, at the same time it can also be used to characterize the value orientations of large collectivities. (1973 p.1)

It is for these reasons that much of the preliminary work in this paper is justifiably concerned with establishing a definition of the term and, later in chapter 4, the appropriate method of measurement.

"Attitude" is taken to mean in this research the set of constructs that students bring to their lessons and to which they may refer when responding to questions from the teacher/researcher about language learning experiences. Yet there is a more pressing need to look more closely at the term itself and how it might be explained in an educational context.

Firstly we must separate "Attitude" from "values" and "beliefs"; all are thought to share several common characteristics in that they are all psychological "constructs". In other words, they cannot be observed and directly measured, only inferred by the researcher or observed in other patterns of behaviour. Each set of constructs explains therefore an individual's internally expressed relationship to the environment that surrounds him/her. For this reason the attributes of an attitude, opinion or belief held by an individual member of a social group may be similar to those of others within the same environment such as the classroom, but they cannot be assumed to be identical.

An evaluation of student attitudes is also a more satisfactory way of analysing more adolescent responses towards MFL. Both "beliefs" and "values" are seen as more long-term constructs that contain judgements on the value and state of things as perceived by the individual. Beliefs are viewed as constructs that may guide behaviour but not ultimately direct it, or "pull or push" it -in the language of social behavioural psychology. The constructs pertaining to belief are not seen as having any emotional or sentient connotations, or any consequential feeling for or against the object of the belief. They are cognitive rather than affective in that they relate primarily to what the individual perceives to be knowledge. In motivational terms, beliefs direct the individual towards general and possibly, long-term goals representing the individual's interests as opposed to short-term and more specific targets. Students, for example, or teachers may express a "belief" that languages in schools are valuable but this may not reflect their feelings towards or sensory awareness of the subject on a daily basis.

If "beliefs" indicate what an individual may perceive to be true, "values" indicate what that individual may wish to be true and what that individual might wish to aim for.

Unlike belief "values" are always thought to contain some implied, non-specific behavioural goal. Values cannot therefore be considered reliable indicators of behaviour. If, for example, membership of the "Green Party" were considered a "value", it might indicate a general predilection in an individual towards supporting the preservation of finite energy sources but it does not necessarily indicate specific behaviour patterns, such as the exclusive purchase of organic food or protesting with "Swampy".

Both these constructs are more likely to be an indication of more abstract, ultimately desirable goals or assumptions about the nature of ones surroundings. "Attitudes", by contrast, are thought to be more reliable indicators of behaviour. On the one hand they are considered sufficiently resilient to the individual to resist regular change, but, on the other hand, not immune to more long-term modification and refinement.

In Platonic terms, attitudes can be a fusion of the cognitive and the affective. Allport, (1954 cited in Elms, 1976) discussing what might be said to constitute an attitude, described the two forms in which they exist within the individual. Attitudes are seen as either a physiological arrangement of feelings "a mental or neural state of readiness", (op. cit) or as "persistent organisations of thoughts and feelings, ready to be expressed when the appropriate occasion arises". DeFleur and Westie (1963, op. cit) described attitudes as:

> The operation of some hidden or hypothetical variable, functioning within the behaving individual, which shapes, acts upon or mediates the observable behaviour. (op. cit. p.37).

Advocates of the "latent process" view of attitudes, such as Cook and Selltiz (1964) also see a direct link between the psychological constructs of attitudes and subsequent behaviour. The "functional" view of attitudes, proposed by behaviourists, contends that attitudes work by serving the needs of the individual through the attainment of goals. They represent judgements about the positive and negative feelings an individual may experience about an environment. As such, attitudes are inextricably linked to behaviour. Fritz Heider (1946) and Milton Rosenberg (1960) and others have argued that those attitudes that help an individual attain goals are perceived by the individual as

positive and those that inhibit personal development are viewed as negative and likely to be discarded.

Attitudes that are maintained in the longer term are more likely to have evolved through repeated processes of refinement. These potentially stronger attitudes may also play a significant role in directing the individual's behaviour by gaining strength through expression as well as blocking the development of other, more conflicting attitudes. The majority of researchers however believe that no matter how entrenched an attitude may be the individual retains an ability to change it.

Having arrived at a more precise definition of "attitude" it is now important to consider conduct or behaviours in MFL. It is this link between attitudes and potential behaviours that forms the theoretical basis for this investigation. If attitudes help form the behaviour of an individual in conjunction with motivational variables it is useful at this point to examine just how attitudes might affect the behaviour of teenage MFL students within a classroom environment.

2.11 Attitudes and behaviour

"French is pants!" (1998, Year 9 student, School 2).

For the purposes of this study, "attitude" is assumed to be a more satisfactory indicator and "independent determinant" (Lemon, 1973) of pupil classroom behaviour. There are many social scientists who believe the relationship between attitude and behaviour is more complex and not causal and that they may both be products of different phenomena. Such an analysis is beyond the scope of this paper and whatever the precise relationship "attitude" is assumed here to determine behaviour. There is certainly today still much support for Allport's (1935) definition of attitudes as a "neural state" that is organised through experience,

> .. exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects or situations with which it is associated. (cited in Lemon, 1973, p8).

Kelly (1955) contended that people build for themselves a representational model of the world to enable the charting of a course of behaviour in relation to it - a proposition that

is able to support the role of attitudes outlined above. Pupils in schools start at an early age the constant process of observation, interpretation, prediction and control. Contemporary educationalists believe this may explain phenomena governing cognitive and affective development. Ultimately it may explain how students might respond when formulating their responses to the classroom activities. Pupils make an observation on classroom involvement, evaluate the likely participation according to a constantly updated value-system that determines the degree or intensity or lack of response. At each stage there is no fixed quality or value to the observations or judgements made beyond that to the individual. They are constructs that best explain motives and relationships at that time and are constantly revised. A construct might explain the rationale behind a student's participation or lack of it in classroom listening/speaking exercises or a readiness to participate in a question-answer session in the target language. It does not mean necessarily that (s)he "likes" that activity or "dislikes" it per se, (although this may appear so or actually be so) merely that it is adjudged to be in the student's interest according to recalled, previously evaluated and predicted scenarios to respond in that way at that time.

The construct is prone to review and change as the student's view and understanding of his/her surroundings and curricular opportunities becomes more sophisticated and a better explanation and predictor of phenomena found.

Within this explanation of the classroom dynamic, knowledge is relative in that it is individual and based on propositions and refutations made by the individual. It is not collective and automatically shared with others in the classroom. Teachers therefore "must gain some sense of what is being seen" by the student in order to "design and implement ... undertakings", (Kelly, 1970, p.262). To this end MFL teachers must gain some insight into the attitudes prevalent in the classroom in order to capture a sense of what is being seen.

Attitudes and subsequent behaviour are also influenced by factors outside the individual, namely by other individuals who are in a position to influence the individual-consciously or otherwise. Fishbein (1980) proposed that a predisposition towards a certain action ("attitude towards the act") is determined by the individual's beliefs and subsequent evaluations of this in measured in conjunction with what other individuals or groups might think of this action (the "subjective norm") and subsequent

evaluations of this. Pupil X might, for example, think French/German is "pants" (tote Hose?). His / her evaluation of this might be that they do not wish to be heard speaking the language in front of others as this might cause embarrassment or a sense of failure. This value when expressed numerically would be divided by a value expressing what pupil (or person) Y might think of X were s/he to speak the language multiplied by how much X values Y's opinion. This quotient would represent an "attitude" towards an act. If pupil Y also thinks French is pants, then s/he is unlikely to esteem pupil X were s/he to speak it and an inevitably low quotient would result.

Similarly, Ajzen (1988) contends that if the student is well disposed towards the required behaviour expected by the subject then a more positive intention to perform that behaviour will develop. Being well disposed might be encouraged by a significant pay-off such as approval by a "significant other" (a teacher, parent or friend). The converse of this is also true. It follows then that students, who incline to the behaviour patterns or attitudes in others that promote language-learning (e.g. a readiness to listen and respond or a positive view of school exchange trips) view MFL study as useful and enjoyable. Those who are encouraged by parents and/or significant others and who display a higher level of interest in the target language community are more inclined to display positive reactions to the learning process.

2.12 Attempting to measure attitudes

The unavoidable conclusions of the above definitions of attitudes is that by identifying hidden behaviour the researcher moves away from the directly observable and has to infer information on behaviours. This limits the possible data-gathering methods to self-reporting techniques. The Thurstone method, Likert scaling and semantic differential techniques all follow these principles and are consequently the most commonly used ways of measuring attitudes. The methods chosen and the rationale explaining their suitability is outlined more fully in chapter 4.2-3.

2.13 Attitudes and Motivation

What is motivation and how is it connected to attitudes?

A more comprehensive study of the precise relationship between attitudes and motivation is not appropriate here although it is important to attempt a working definition of motivation as used in this investigation.

What is motivation? Students certainly bring a series of attitudes with them upon entering the MFL classroom and this influences and is influenced by the different kinds and levels of motivation inherent in the student. In functional terms, it has already been shown that the attitude/motivation causal link referred to by Stern (1983) in Section 2.8 is determined by the perceived advantages predicted in the behaviour(s). But to get a more accurate view of the relationship it is helpful to differentiate between motivation, motives and attitude. Schiefele (1974) proposes a model that emphasises the relative, long-term nature of attitudes in people, endorsing the view explored in Section 2.11. They are described as more constant and related to habit and disposition. They are in many ways idiosyncratic in nature, and as the previous sections have attempted to indicate, subject to observation-evaluation-predictive processes within the individual and influenced by the individual's perceptions of others' judgements. Motivation, by contrast, may well be influenced by attitudes but is also directed by motives. These are seen as more immediate features of behaviours that may determine responses that are spontaneous or reactive. "Motives" may well therefore describe those more short-term reactions that are more prone to change than attitudes.

As well as attempting to define attitude and motivation as terms it is also important to judge how they may manifest themselves to the classroom observer. Evidence of these constructs is to be perceived (though not observed) in the variables that impact on attitude and motivation, such as the quality of teaching, the resulting experiences of success or failure in MFL, views of the target language community and the influences of parents, friends and the wider community.

A diagrammatic summary of the variables affecting student attitudes might be represented thus.

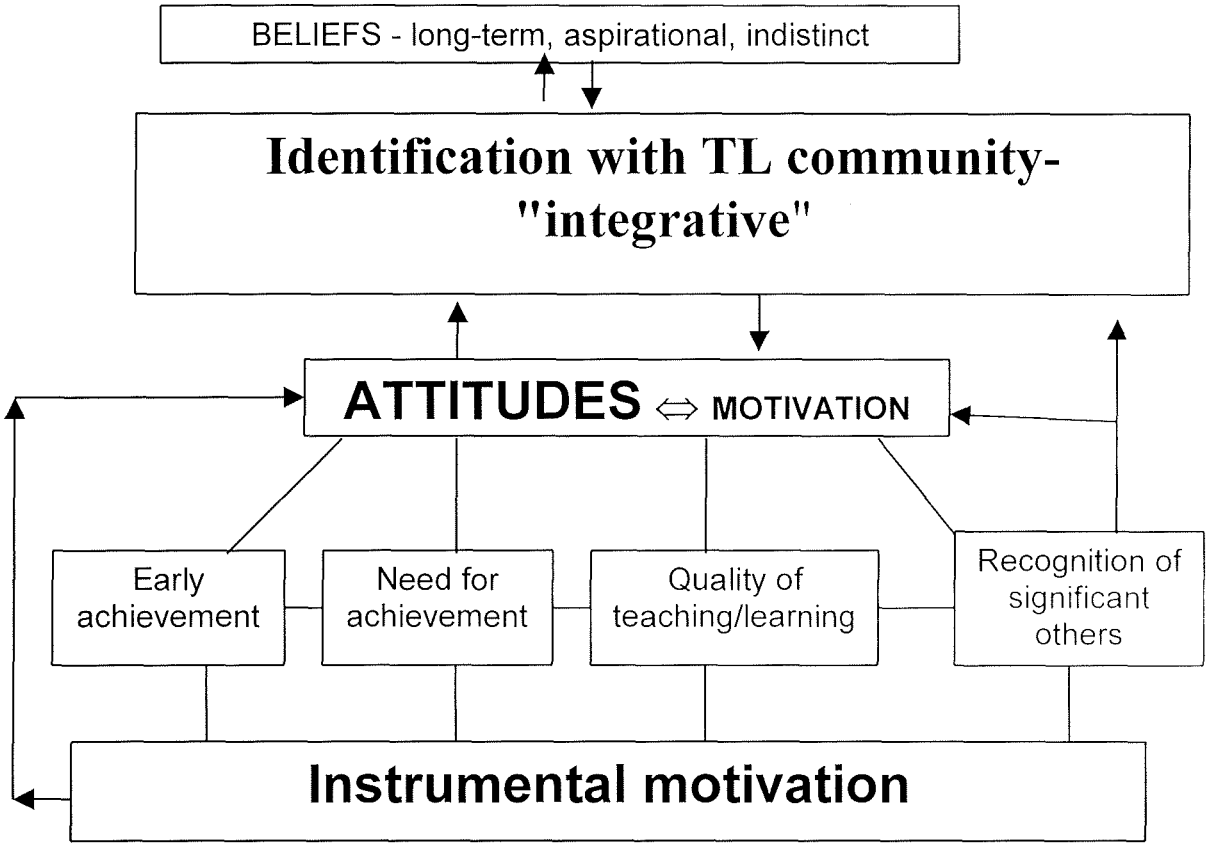


Fig.1. Summary of variables influencing pupil attitudes and motivation.

Motivation can be determined by attitudes towards the target language community. The duality of integrative and instrumental motivation introduced by Gardner and Lambert and outlined in the literature review was refined further by Dörnyei (1988). Learners with a high level of instrumental motivation were seen as more likely to achieve in terms of acquiring an intermediate level of proficiency. However, integrative motivation was judged to be necessary to develop the positive attitudes required to get beyond these levels to a higher level of linguistic proficiency.

> ...the integrative motivational subsystem is determined by more general attitudes and beliefs, involving an interest in Foreign Languages and people, the cultural and intellectual values the target language conveys. Dörnyei (1988, p69)

Motivation, it would appear, is the resulting variable conditioned by the constructs beliefs and attitudes as expressed in the views of the foreign culture and community.

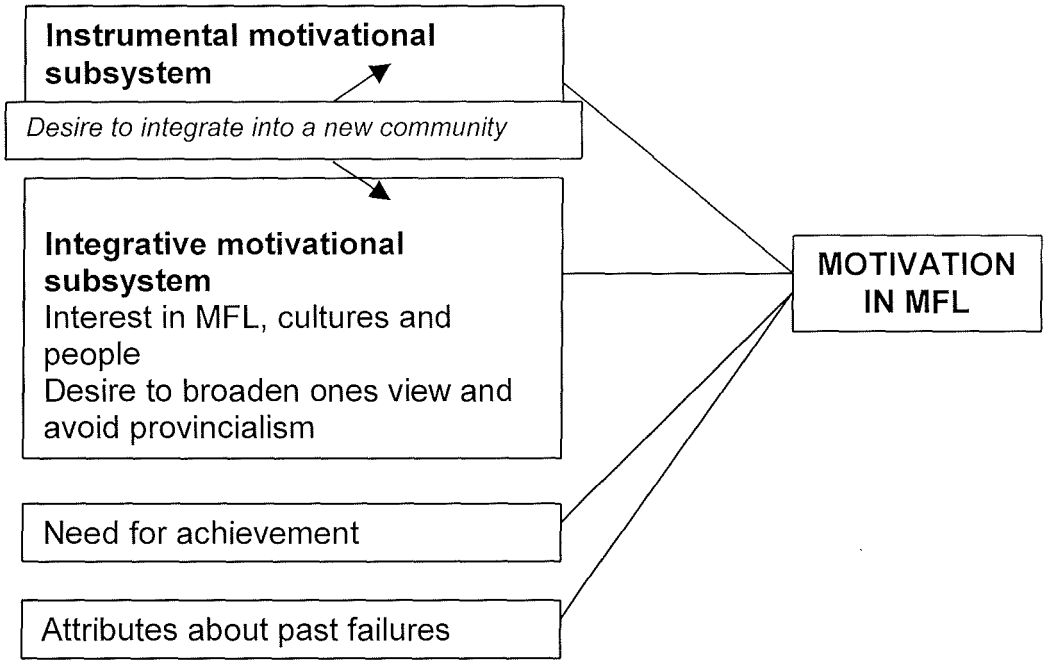


Fig. 2. Conceptualised variable of motivation in MFL learning (Dörnyei, 1988 p.68).

2.14 Changes to PoS 1999

To preserve the consistency of the research methodology it was essential to continue to work from the earlier version of the PoS in all questionnaires throughout the project. In review meetings it was therefore decided to ignore amendments to this document that were introduced into schools in 1999 and this is acknowledged in the study. However, many MFL staff will recognise that these modifications to the PoS were introduced into schools in 1999 and the format of the PoS used in the data may not be immediately recognisable.

Nevertheless, in all the essential details that this study covers, there is little difference between the two documents. Indeed, the modifications often entailed merging several aspects of a skill together and that had previously been listed separately. This is typically evident in the reduction of skills from a-o in the Section 2 ("Language Skills) to a-j in the current document. Similarly, the "Language-Learning Skills section was reduced from a-i to a-e. It is therefore suggested that the earlier document may be equally conducive to listing and cataloguing responses to language skills in the classroom as the current document.

2.15 Research ethics statement

School based research: A code of practice

- The researcher is Stephen Levy-Thaw.
- A participant is anybody who is approached by the researcher to provide data.
- The researcher will obtain permission from participants at the beginning of the research to use their transcripts, observations or quotations in any report.
- The researcher will only use data from participants in a non- ascribable form (i.e. anonymity / pseudonyms).
- The researcher will seek permission from appropriate authorities to quote from any document that is not in the public domain.
- The researcher will negotiate all accounts or descriptions of practice with the participants concerned (other than from his own classroom).
- The criteria whereby a participant(s) may challenge the researcher's description(s) are those of fairness, accuracy and relevance.

CHAPTER 3. CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH AND THE FIELD:

3.1 School contexts, schools' performance and other data.

The schools involved in the research are three similar Secondary Schools referred to as School 1, School 2 and School 3. All lie within a radius of three miles from the M11/A414 motorway interchange on the Herts/Essex border. The three schools are possibly typical of many schools in the South East and, indeed, across the UK in that they are situated on the edge of the town and have catchment areas that include semi-rural housing. They also lie within commuting distance (10-20 miles) of a much larger conurbation that provides a major source of work for the area, and within a major north-south commuter corridor with a motorway network.

They are however linked by more than just geography. The MFL Curriculum Leaders from the three schools were members of the "Harlow and West Essex Steering Group" in Languages that met regularly to discuss teaching and learning issues in MFL. Subsequent developments in local school research led to membership of the West Essex Action Research (WEAR) and continued the history of curricular co-operation.

The three schools have much in common; each is an 11-16 mixed L.M. comprehensive offering French and German with similar socio-economic profiles in the catchment areas. All three schools have GCSE results below the county and national average. There are similar unauthorised absence rates and percentages of SEN students with and without statements. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM band 9-13%) is also similar.

The following table shows the data available from DfES websites for the three schools.

PERFORMANCE DATA 2000							
School	**Total** (pupils aged 15 in 2001)	**SEN**	**% SEN**	**GCSE** (% 5+A*-C)	**GCSE** (% 5+A*-G)	**GCSE** % no pass	**GCSE** (average pts score)
School 1	165	See below	See below	23	90	5	28.4
School 2	153	See below	See below	31	79	15	31.3
School 3	231	33	14.3	38	85	7	30.7

Table 3. Performance data of Schools 1-3, 2000.

SEN DATA						
School	**Number on roll**	**Number of SEN pupils**	**% SEN pupils**	**Number of statemented SEN pupils**	**% statemented SEN pupils**	**% unauthorised absence**
School 1	792	256	32.3	21	2.7	2
School 2	853	166	19.5	12	1.4	0.4
School 3	1118	196	17.5	16	1.4	1.0

Table 4. SEN data of Schools 1-3, 2000. (DfEE web site, 1999)

School 1- a mixed neighbourhood 11-16 LM comprehensive

School 1 is a five-from entry, mixed comprehensive school with 750 pupils aged 11-16. The school is set in a green field site on the outskirts of Harlow and is the nearest secondary school to "Potter Street"- one of the original neighbourhoods in the development of Harlow Newtown and drawing pupils from the local area and South East of the town. The school describes itself in the prospectus as a "traditional comprehensive" with a stable intake and recognised catchment area. There are strong links with five partner primary schools and active links with local industry and Harlow Tertiary College. Some parents in the neighbourhood are also attracted by more successful schools in the area and some opt for neighbouring Hertfordshire 11-18 Comprehensives and other schools in the M11 corridor principally Leventhorpe (Sawbridgeworth) and schools in Bishops Stortford and the private sector. Some 60% of pupils continue into Further Education. Approximately 14% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is slightly below the figure nationally but higher than the norm in Essex.

School 2- a mixed Voluntary Controlled 11-16 LM comprehensive.

School 2 is a Church of England voluntary controlled comprehensive school with c.850 pupils aged 11-16. The school is set in attractive surroundings on the outskirts of Epping and is the only secondary school in the town, drawing pupils from Epping and North Weald, parts of Ongar, Waltham Abbey and Theydon Bois.

Whilst School 2 is the natural choice for parents in this area, many parents are attracted by more successful 11-16 and 11-18 schools in the M11 corridor principally Roding Valley, Anglo-European (Ingatestone), West Hatch and The Davenant (Loughton) as well as schools in neighbouring Hertfordshire. Long established schools in the private sector also have a significant recruitment within the town. Despite this "the entire ability range is covered by the ability profile of pupils on entry (to School 2) but the proportion of pupils of relatively high ability is smaller than those whose ability is below average" (Ofsted,1994). The school is in FSM band 3 (9-13%). This is slightly below the figure nationally but higher than the norm in Essex.

In MFL, standards were adjudged by Ofsted to be below the national average, whilst closer to the local average for similar schools. Pupils at KS3 were seen to perform at a level commensurate with their ability; signs of underachievement at KS4 were noted. In particular a significant minority of pupils at KS4 were seen to have little self-motivation. The quality of teaching judged satisfactory - good in 80% (1994) and 93% (1997) of lessons and particularly high in German.

Departmental research found that:

- Whilst Ofsted's judgement that KS4 performance was below the national average was undeniably true, results were comparable with and not significantly different from, those of similar schools in the area. Evidence for this appears below;
- Results were consistently higher in German;
- Results of more able pupils (1995-8) appeared to be, on average, approximately one GCSE grade lower than their results in other subjects and at least one grade in the results of average and less able students;
- At GCSE boys outperformed girls opposing a national trend;

- The School 2000 "Panda" report and "October Package" showed MFL (German) performing well when measured against the other 18 schools in FSM band 3 with average and more able GCSE linguists achieving half a grade higher than similarly abled students in other LEA schools;

The 2000 Value Added Report produced by the LEA class MFL performance within the band A*-B with a VA score of 103.9. This is the only subject in the school to achieve this. The overall LEA percentile banding was 108.43 and rated "B" performance by the LEA.

School 3- a mixed neighbourhood 11-16 LM comprehensive.

School 3 was the first secondary school opened in Harlow in 1954 and is currently the largest with a stable 8 form entry producing a roll of 1,120 students and 60 staff. The catchment area includes the immediate locality of the school in the East of Harlow but also several outlying villages such as Sheering, Matching and Matching Green to the East of Harlow and, paradoxically, Nazeing to the West. The GCSE results are the best in Harlow but still below the LEA's and the national average. See below. The school has been at the forefront of attempts to interpret Ofsted data. Yellis, Panda and LEA value added information have all been used to prove that the majority of pupils achieve what might be expected and a "significant number achieve above what one might expect" (C. Fluskey, Headteacher. 1998).

The school has been successful in forging links with local industry and is regularly the recipient of substantial grants and achievement awards. School 3 was a pilot school for the original Records of Achievement project, a link school for TVEI. Latterly, it was one of the first 60 schools across the country to be included in the DTI "On Line" Internet project.

Pupils have a choice of French or German on entry to the school with the ablest starting the second language in year 8. At KS4 the school has not enforced MFL as compulsory for all and many pupils elect not to continue the study of a language. In 1999 "only just over half of the current (KS4) pupils continue to learn a foreign language. This provision does not meet statutory requirements", (Ofsted, 1999).

3.2 Demise of MFL exchanges since 1990

All three schools have in the past held relatively strong links with French and German Schools and communities. School 2 was particularly proud of its foreign links (the annual exchanges with Eppingen, Epping's twin town in SW Germany and with Cerizay in Western France. In 1988 the school became the first 11-16 school in Essex to set up and sustain a programme of work experience for Year 11 in France.

Both School 1 and School 3 have a history of exchanges with both France and Germany. School 1 had a series of successful exchanges with schools in North Germany and Frankfurt that continued until the mid-1980s. School 3 regularly provided students for the annual school exchange with Velizy near Paris co-ordinated by teachers and financially supported by the Town Council. In addition the school also ran visits to a study centre near Poitiers. However, all schools experienced a rapid decline in student interest towards foreign exchanges and study visits from the 1990's onwards despite increasing levels of staff support. In keeping with many similar schools in the area the long-standing school French and German exchanges became increasingly untenable. Both School 1 and School 3 have also ceased attempting to run exchanges although all three schools still run occasional short, non-reciprocal study visits to France and Germany. The pattern of diminished levels of interest towards exclusively linguistic trips and exchanges must also feature in the contextual setting of this study.

3.3 Sample group data (GCSE 2000-1 cohort)

school	**MFL**	**Total in set**	**KS3 results** (Nos. in set level 4)	**KS3 results** (Nos. in set level 5)	**Verbal stanine (CAT)** median	**Nos. predicted A*-C** (GCSE)
School 1, Harlow	German	**26**	**20**	**6**	**n/a**	**15**
School 2, Epping	French	**31**	**17**	**14**	**6**	**22**
School 3, Harlow	French	**28**	**14**	**14**	**n/a**	**15**

Table 5. Sample group data at KS3.

3.4 Definition of sample (1).

The practical considerations of finance, time, availability of supply staff and accessibility to school pupils make it impossible to involve all the c.350 W. Essex GCSE MFL students in the study. This is the approximate number of pupils (see below) from the seven 11-16 comprehensives of West Essex 2000-1 cohort that may come within the definitions given below. These considerations are compounded by a sensitivity of some teaching/learning issues linked to the research in a time when schools are increasingly scrutinised and there is an increasing likelihood of union disruption. It was therefore necessary to limit the field to a more manageable size. The three schools were chosen for homogeneity, accessibility, proximity to each other and the degree to which they can be said to represent schools in the area.

The subset comprised around 70 students that had already been divided into groups (sets) according to ability and/or learning characteristics. The majority of students exhibited broadly similar levels of ability or learning characteristics in Year 9 and remained within the same or parallel setted groups with few changes until Year 11. One school reduced the number of students permitted to continue studying a language, despite a MFL entitlement at KS4. The subjects observed therefore represented a stratified sample.

The population of 13-16 year-old MFL students of average and above average ability in West Essex as defined above is difficult to determine precisely as the data represents a constantly changing field. However, the population of all 15 year old students in 2000 from the schools in the range achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE totalled 344 (DfEE). Whilst this may not be necessarily the same number of students achieving A*-C in languages (it is likely to be less than this with typical data from these schools showing a 0.5 to 1 grade deficit when compared to the LEA mean) it gives an indication of what the population of the area of study might be.

Geographically, the area is defined less by postcode than educational links engendered through the Essex LEA. The schools are situated on the Herts/Essex border in and around Harlow. The Davenant School, Roding Valley and West Hatch Schools are excluded from the study although they may be deemed to be located in West Essex. This is because they are located closer to London within the administration of Epping

Forest Borough and have some selection criteria, which to a greater or lesser degree, contrast with those identified in the sample. They are also oversubscribed 11-18 schools achieving average or above average results at GCSE. The post 16 element to these schools inevitably offers an additional dimension to 11-16 tuition.

The seven remaining 11-16 comprehensives share a high degree of homogeneity in terms of GCSE and VQ results, number of statemented pupils and numbers of pupils with special needs, as well as unauthorised absence rates and free-school meals percentages. (See *School Contexts*).

All three schools contain students determined by the setting policy of the individual departments. The criteria for selection to these sets are similar in each case but not synonymous. The Year 9 students can be said to comprise those of average and above average linguistic ability. This corresponds to a typical verbal stanine of 5-7 in NFER CAT standard tests. Non-verbal and quantitative stanines may vary and were not considered in the selection process. Some students with a verbal score of 4 but with a positive MFL learning profile may be included in the group. A positive learning profile can be defined as displaying learning characteristics that result from a higher level of motivation to that evident elsewhere in the group which can better support a lower standard of linguistic proficiency. No students in the sample have a verbal stanine of 8-9 or less than 4.

In Year 9 this category can be further defined as those attaining National Curriculum Level Four and above and more usually Level 5 in Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) results. In Year 10 all students in the group will have demonstrated a varying level of ability to use tenses to enhance their active use of the target language in Attainment Targets 2 and 4 and will therefore be approximately NC Level 5.

The sets chosen in Year 9 are, in all three instances, parallel sets determined by timetable limitations and not exclusive "top sets" as determined solely by ability across the full range. Nevertheless, within the sample are some of the most able in the school year.

Is it possible to show similarities between the school groups mathematically? Attempts to use non-parametric statistical tests to establish a correlation between the three sample

sets were unsuccessful. Variations in attitudinal responses to classroom activities of the PoS were sufficiently inconsistent to establish a statistical validity in chi-squared tests. After tutorial discussions it was concluded that such probability tests could not support work that seeks to explore attitudes with such a small sample. The suitability of tests designed to measure attitudes is covered more fully in the next chapter.

It is however possible to define the subset further by examining the patterns of behaviour that characterise the sets using the views of Ajzen (1988), that is, defining the MFL learners by identifying their attitudes towards pre-determined categories of behaviours to which they may or may not incline.

By Year 9 students have generally adopted patterns of behaviour that are determined by the perceived value or "pay-off" offered by the subject. If individuals see the advantage of performing behaviours in the classroom then they will react accordingly-whether positively or negatively. The following schematic representation of both poles in a behaviour continuum attempts to identify the members of the sample by illustrating how the students may approach MFL lessons. Clearly, the most members of the subset in this study are more likely to exhibit modes of behaviour closer to those represented in column 1. However, this is not exclusively so for all schools and there is evidence from the questionnaires and interviews to support the view that some students in the sample may display characteristics somewhere between these two extremes.

	SAMPLE-"Upper sets"	"Lower sets"
Imposed definitions of school, parents, friends, peers	NC Level/KS3 5+, GCSE grades A*-D. Higher Level GCSE. subset status and recognition *("You're good at Fr/Ger!")* "Boffin/achiever but modest about it" "Harry Potter" image	NC Level/KS3 result 2-4, GCSE grades D-G. Foundation. Collective, vocal denigration of all levels of ability "Underachiever and proud of it" "Bart Simpson" image
Classroom traits	More confident, fuller response to e.g. listening/speaking. Greater level of optimism towards new tasks e.g. level of concentration in class listening/speaking introduced by teacher. Need for improvement suggested by patent/teacher acknowledged by student.	Negative learning experiences. Less confident, minimum response to new listening/speaking work introduced by teacher. Instinctive responses in listening/speaking, more short term motives. Awareness of difficulties causing pre-judging of task difficulty. Need for improvement disputed.

	Will work with adults to achieve goals e.g. assistants and FLA	Avoids working with FLA. Greater need for physical movement/engagement in tasks.
Expectations of significant others	High level of expectation. Positive parental support, some knowledge of MFL (usually French).	Where parental support prevails it needs to uphold legitimacy of Foundation level work and basic skills. Lack of support for MFL homeworks and coursework.
Perceptions/ attributions of success/ failure	Individual, pragmatic, rationalised, enterprising and proportionate (e.g. recognition of ability or full/minimal effort). Success when encountered is anticipated, when success is not encountered it elicits rationalised response (e.g. "I didn't revise").	Individual/collective, erratic /opportunistic and determined by external variables (e.g. luck, feelings on the day) Disproportionate blame and/or self-criticism, low self-esteem e.g. professes lack of aptitude/blames another. (e.g. "I'm useless", "You didn't let me try properly!") Inability to recognise degrees of success/failure.
Resulting behaviours	Improved confidence/motivation. More practice, more sustained effort that fuels more success. Greater interest in ways to improve e.g. study skills that might improve strategies for remembering. Less reliance on teacher, who may be considered means by which achievement occurs. More prepared to engage in creative/independent learning.	Less confidence/less practice, less sustained effort, increased demotivation and daydreaming/absence/truancy. Accepting an inability to improve. Inevitability of failure and greater reliance on teacher to provide impetus to learn or focus for blame. Short-term goals-seeks to more readily exploit opportunities for creative or independent learning.

Table 6. Poles in continuum of MFL learning characteristics.

Inevitably the sample did not remain constant. Year 10 saw some small alterations to the pilot groups-an unavoidable consequence of longitudinal designs. In one school the same group continued unchanged in KS4 (School 1). In another school the set continued with only 4 students changing language (these were also tracked-School 2). In the third school a small group of students were directed away from languages at KS4.

These three groups form the sample.

The sample can be further defined post factum once a clearer picture of the group's characteristics emerges in responses to *Ques2*. This is considered in *Definition of Sample (2)* in Chapter 5.2.1.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH TECHNIQUES:

4.1 The mode of interrogation and working hypothesis

The mode of interrogation may be said to comprise three stages. Firstly, this study aims to establish a theoretical research basis within the context of a wider problematic field. Chapters 2-3 attempt this. The second stage aims to present the result of observations of a local field within the wider empirical field (Chapter 5). Finally, the conclusions are considered against existing findings in Chapter 6.

Initially, the researcher will look at responses to the statutory requirements for all MFL learners, namely, the PoS in MFL, common to all state schools. Whilst it may be impractical to determine the degree to which this is consistently applied by staff of the three schools in the study, the document represents a theoretical standard in planning terms as it applies to all English and Welsh MFL departments teaching the National Curriculum. It is, perhaps, more than any other notional link (such as GCSE criteria or SCAA schemes of work) a cohesive web of definitions outlining the work, which the schools have in common.

There is, however, limited value in merely recording a like of one particular activity and a dislike of another without attempting to explore the possible factors for the construct. The two are inextricably linked. Tracking students' preferences (as defined by the PoS) from Year 9 to Year 11 can help to identify possible learning characteristics of students in the subset but also provides a framework for investigating reasons why pupils may offer such views. Variables that shape responses to the *Questionnaire 1* are explored in *Questionnaires 2 and 3* and the directed interviews from Year 11.

Between these two strands of this study it is hoped to investigate the pupil responses to MFL as defined by Part 1 of the National Curriculum. The working hypothesis to be tested is: There is a continuum in MFL learning that stretches from more positive beginnings in KS3 to a more negative outlook in later years among average and more able students in three West Essex 11-16 Schools.

4.2 Measuring attitudes

Best (1970) describes most educational research as descriptive in the sense that it is concerned with:

> relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of view, or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing. (cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.67)

But, hypotheses in attitudinal research are notoriously difficult to substantiate given their highly "soft-edged" propositions based on constructs that are unobservable. Hopkins' description of classroom research comprising a "myriad of contextual variables" (1985) aptly describes how evidence can disguise and mislead the researcher in school-based research using a relatively small field. Robson (1993) outlines both the benefits and drawbacks of such work.

> The respondent is often in a uniquely favourable position to tell you about what they are doing or what they have done. ..... attitudes form a very important target for self-report techniques, and are relatively difficult to get at. They are often complex and multi-dimensional. (Robson, 1993).

To define what a student brings to the classroom precisely is beset with all the difficulties of attitudinal research referred to here. The work does not deal in the measurement of constants as different people can have different motives that may result in the same response. That response in a student may also have a variety of factors to explain it or the respondent in a survey may or may not be in a position to explain the response. In Fishbein's "Attitude towards the Act" theory (1980) we considered the influence of significant others on the individual and his/her consequent propensity towards a particular act. One can also expect a number of respondents to answer a question in a survey in a different way to when asked that same question at a later date.

To minimise this effect it becomes necessary, in attitudinal surveys, to ask multiple questions of the respondents and to cross-reference the results to get a better angle on the variables under observation. Different responses, however, can also be triggered by the juxtaposition of key questions and so the construction of the questionnaires is

fundamentally significant part of the design and considered separately below in the section *Data gathering process.*

Within the context of this study emphasis is laid on the perceptions students have of their MFL studies and classroom experiences. The work attempts to explain their attitudes and motivation that are driven by conscious or perceived values rather than more unconsciously reflex values. The research will attempt to achieve this by examining perceived and self-acknowledged levels of enjoyment or lack of it towards classroom skills, usefulness, difficulty and views of the target language community. By definition it excludes other factors such as gender, individual ages and more precisely defined levels of ability within the sample.

4.3 The study design and how it seeks to eliminate bias

The difficulties inherent in measuring soft-edged variables have already been outlined above. It was, therefore, important to choose appropriate methods of measurement that might strengthen the design and reduce the effects of bias at every opportunity.

Firstly, this research was designed as longitudinal in that it follows three sets of average and more able MFL students from Key Stage 3 and throughout KS4, i.e. from the age of 13 to 16.

It is also a cohort study rather than a more straightforward one-year cross-sectional study that might aim to record the responses of different samples in one year 9 cohort. This ensures that the data more readily reflects an ongoing tracking and monitoring exercise of targeted samples rather than producing a snapshot of a particular year at a particular time, and hence, a greater possibility of identifying real change rather than chance occurrence.

The evidence sought to support the working hypothesis of this paper is furthermore defined in terms of the National Curriculum, but this forms only part of the much broader spectrum of experiences of MFL students in the classroom. It considers identified variables among a host of others and as such, it can therefore be considered a trend study. Longitudinal trend or cohort studies are particularly useful in sociological research that seeks to "show how changing views or properties of individuals fit

together into the changing properties of social systems as a whole". (Cohen & Manion. p.69). This might be the motivation of a body of pupils reacting, for example, to the KS3 examination or new or recently introduced GCSE courses or more streamlined setting principles introduced to improve school response to the demands of league tables.

> Cohort studies are particularly appropriate when investigators attempt to establish causal relationships, for this task involves identifying changes in certain characteristics that result in changes in others.... [It is] especially useful in ...research because it can show how changing properties of individuals fit together in to changing properties of social systems as a whole. (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.69)

Such studies derive strength from the acknowledged fallibility in the method; inherent weaknesses in design are consistent weaknesses. Longitudinal studies, in short, make it easier to estimate bias and reliability.

This research design can therefore aim to record events and processes that have happened or are in the process of taking place, and is better placed to establish patterns of development. Consequently, if the research can establish a validity in the discernible patterns of a trend study, then it may be able to make more accurate predictions regarding possible future reactions of similar groups of students in the three schools.

The decision to use "upper sets" for the survey further strengthens the design, for the relative maturity of the students in the programme facilitated the management of the data gathering process. The *Literature Review* acknowledges the work of Clark and Trafford in finding that the most able recognised the value in learning a foreign language. Respondents to questionnaires and interviewees were accordingly more co-operative in that they were more amenable to following instructions, responding to requests for information, constructive responses and prompts in the interviews; they were less likely to be deflected from detailing events, experiences and issues. Levels of oracy and literacy were significantly higher in the sample than in parallel sets of lower ability and so contributed to the accuracy and coherence of the responses.

Any attempt to assess which skills and activities are preferred or disliked (aim 2) is likely to be easier with such a sample. Measuring levels of perceived enjoyment of more ambitious pupils might arrive at a better snapshot of a "Feel good" factor based on perceived academic progress rather than the wider variety of extraneous issues (such as amount of time off-task) that might feature in the choices of a less able subset.

Few research programmes can anticipate in detail its development. For this reason a longer term design eliciting views from the same sample over three years offers a greater opportunity to refine the research goals and to recover, albeit in part, any missed information. It also afforded the opportunity for the researcher to investigate apparent anomalies in the data from questionnaires through the use of interview in Year 11.

4.4 Qualitative and quantitative techniques in the measurement of attitudes

In sections 2.10 - 2.13, I sought to explore the nature of attitudes, how they are formed and how they might be measured in the classroom. It is now time to consider the kind of data such an exercise might require and how it could be organised. Initially it is helpful to consider the data in qualitative and quantitative terms.

The scientific method underpins quantitative research methods. These are characterised by a positivistic rigour and a:

> tough-minded orientation to facts and observable natural phenomena.
> (Beck, 1979).

The processes that take place in classrooms, however, cannot be said to reflect solely one objective, deterministic reality. The search for any universal conditions that may govern teenagers' responses to languages using the nomothetic laws of quantitative methods is more likely to lack the required level of proof, return a null hypothesis in any statistical proposition and prove nothing. Attitudes are slippery phenomena to measure and detailed measurements taken from one sample group cannot always be replicated with other similar sets or indeed with that same group on subsequent occasions. Chapter 2 referred to the relativity of classroom experiences and knowledge. Causality and classrooms are uneasy bedfellows and the design must acknowledge this.

4.5 Identifying bias in quantitative techniques used in small-scale studies

In the context of this study, the attitudes of 13-16 year old students do not constitute a fixed reality. The students themselves do not embody a single homogenous entity governed by a uniform coda of values, which, when identified, may reveal a rationale to student classroom responses in MFL work. The students represent a series of sub-groupings and individuals with disparate and sometimes contrasting or overlapping values. They may construe and seek to explain their worlds in different ways using different interpretations at different times to each other. These constructs may also change over time and at different rates to others in the sample.

It is more readily supposed by educational observers that the dynamic of social investigation is better analysed by approaches that acknowledge more individual responses and that do not exclude the more subjective evidence such as that associated with qualitative methods. It is thus proposed that qualitative data with the requisite degree of contextualisation can strengthen the research design of this paper.

It is, of course, entirely appropriate initially to measure student responses to the National Curriculum using quantitative methods. Few researchers in education can avoid making use of quantitative representation and statistical analysis of data. It is simply the most convenient way to collect and organise the measurements. There is also a need to establish whether the data recorded is representative of the field under observation and this is best-achieved using methods associated with quantitative analysis such as probability tests, but there is also a danger in the over reliance on quantification. If, in using the PoS and Questionnaire 1 (*Ques1)*, one forgets it may categorise constructs determined by other, unknown or unanticipated variables (such as time, interest, level of difficulty, usefulness, boredom) in addition to those measured (perceived enjoyment / usefulness, neutrality, perceived lack of enjoyment/usefulness), then it might represent an imprecise data collection tool. Furthermore, if the process described by Kelly (and outlined in Chapter 2) is accepted in which students evaluate the "pay-back" of possible behaviours and, accordingly, predict their responses, then the design must recognise such "constructs" as non-discrete variables. The measurements taken in *Ques1* may not therefore in themselves represent absolute values, which can only question the validity of quantitative analysis.

4.6 Why qualitative techniques may be more appropriate to a local, school-based enquiry

Schools have become justifiably obsessed with measurement; it is often seen as the first step in improvement. Quantitative data emanate from outside as well as within the schools in the study and staff that teach these students are not somehow outside the field of enquiry. They too may share or influence to some degree elements of the variables that constitute the classroom experience. Staff certainly define such elements both objectively and subjectively. Quantitative terms are employed that unite the pupils and demonstrate their uniformity within the school classification or according to nationally recognised data such as National Curriculum Levels or CATs Standard assessment scores or "stanines". However, often in differently detailed classifications, staff and schools describe students using less abstract, more qualitative terminologies that emphasise the differences between pupils such as their conflicting values and attitudes, backgrounds and patterns of behaviour. Whilst such terms may require significant contextualisation before they become transferable to other audiences (such as other schools or parents and outside agencies) or are valuable for research purposes they are nonetheless recognised often as a more capable or convenient method of efficiently describing the otherwise intangible truth of an attitude or behaviour. Robson (1993) acknowledges "the potential of providing rich and highly illuminating material" (op.cit) when collecting qualitative data in interviews.

4.7 How this study aims to cross reference the data gathered

The previous section sought to show that using quantitative methods alone may well fail to record the variables in attitudinal research or, alternatively, measure the phenomena in such a way that it includes other aspects of language study outside the formulated research question so that any conclusions remain undetectable or potentially misleading. To measure the attitudinal rationalisations of students requires a methodology that can seek and determine patterns if such exist. It must be able to accommodate patterns emanating from individuals that create constructs to explain and interpret their environment. For this reason, this study, in common with many research designs, acknowledges the need for both qualitative and quantitative techniques initially in collecting and analysing data.

Quantitative analysis of *Ques1* data alone cannot therefore adequately support or refute propositions merely suggest them. To extract other evidence from the data of *Ques1* in order to isolate readings on perceived enjoyment as a construct requires additional tests of the field. Other forms of qualitative evidence such as that offered in the structured interviews (see below and Triangulation) can only further support the design.

> Qualitative data often supplement quantitative findings by exposing information that might otherwise remain a mystery. (Andersen, 1998. P.119)

The more open-ended and guided elements of *Questionnaires 2 and 3* and the structured interviews are more likely to provide evidence on more subjective phenomena such as the origins and development of attitudes and motivation levels between 13-16 and therefore further strengthen the study.

Other studies, referred to in the *Literature review,* have used an interview or second questionnaire to focus on attitudes of students and to support, qualify or refute the findings of an initial questionnaire. Subsequent investigations in the form of Ques 2 & 3 and the structured interviews will seek to do this, namely examine attitudes to perceived enjoyment, motivation, impact of parents' views, attitudes to the country and culture of the language learned, perceived importance and difficulty of MFL within the context of the school curriculum and how this influences responses to classroom activities.

4.8 Using interviews in school-based enquiries

The interviews provided the opportunity to support, reject or qualify the findings from *Questionnaires 1, 2 and 3* using methodological triangulation. They also offered an opportunity to explore apparent anomalies between schools.

There are many good reasons for interviewing able students in any school–based research. Many researchers including Robson (1993) emphasise the advantages and these are quoted above (op.cit). It simply makes good sense to ask the customers what they think of the product. It makes even more sense if the students have vested interest in the outcomes. This often means the interviewee is more eager to respond to the requirements of the interviewer and less prone to respondent fatigue. Obtaining co-operation in interviews beyond initial wariness was not a problem in all three schools.

For this reason however it was important for the proposed interviews be more structured in content. The reality of interviewing teenage students who are eager to help and who appear honest and forthcoming in responses needs to be treated with caution. Trial interviews on parallel classes to the subset in one school revealed a proliferation of data from over-eager teenagers that proved difficult to classify. Time management problems almost always ensured. For this reason the Powney and Watts (1987, chap 2) typology of the respondent interviews was adopted in which the interviewer remains in control and access to open-ended questions is limited by means of an interview schedule within a limited time frame. The agenda is what mattered and the design of the schedule was based on seeking correlation (or not) from interviewees with evidence from the questionnaires.

The observed variables tested in the interviews by scale items included:

- Reasons for liking /disliking activities in MFL as identified by the PoS;
- The position of MFL in the popular-unpopular continuum compared to other subjects;
- Motivational factors (integrative, instrumental/need for achievement)
- Views of other Europeans;
- Perceptions of usefulness/difficulty of MFL.

Within the structured interview format an opportunity was taken to test further the results from *Ques1* and the working hypothesis. This was covered in the first two items on the schedule identified above. This aimed to elicit responses to:

- Using TL in pairwork. Opportunities for student to control pace of work. Using TL in class speaking work with Teacher/FLA in front of peers/adults
- Growing independence and exercising control in learning process
- Reading without recording answers
- Fast pace of listening material representing challenge/sense of achievement
- Preferred types of writing (preference for simpler/mundane as confidence enhancing).
- New technology
- Using grammar and applying it to different contexts.
- KS3 methods in KS4

- Accuracy (use of dictionary) and taking risks with language

The opportunity was taken with open questioning (e.g. question 5) for the interviewer to propose a possible reason for a particular construct. The ensuing response was recorded, as with respondent validation in ethnographic research.

The inclusion of scaled, fill-in and ranking response modes allowed the researcher to process the data more quickly. The interviews lasted no longer than ten minutes to ensure that fatigue did not lead to unnecessary duplication of views. The interviewees were made to feel they had made a positive contribution to school improvement.

The use of open-ended questions in Question 1 allowed the researcher to develop a relationship with the interviewee and to explore attitudes and responses to stimuli questions in greater depth. In this way the propositions based on the results of the *Ques1,* were further tested. Responses were compared with the percentage scores from *Ques1* and from the data provided by *Ques2 & 3.*

Wherever possible the same low to high scoring system was used to weight the Likert scale responses with a high score indicating a more positive view.

4.9 Measures taken to diminish bias in the structured interviews

- Balanced sample of 40 used. Within the stratified sample interviewees were selected according to "positive", "neutral" or " negative" responses to the questionnaires. The total group was thus composed of "thirds" ensuring a balance
- Interview structure piloted and questions/variables rearranged to ensure validity and discriminative power
- Interviewees were not told results of the questionnaires
- Students interviewed individually
- Interviews pre-scripted to promote consistency
- Comments recorded verbatim
- Time frame allocated to questions

4.10 Comparisons with APU

If this localised study is to attempt to identify possible changes in the pattern of MFL learning in West Essex schools (Aim 3), then it must not only consider the tracked measurements and resulting observations of *Ques1* and the learning characteristics suggested by the data from *Ques2 and 3*. It must also examine the conclusions of acknowledged empirical research projects such as the 1985 APU questionnaire ("Pupils' attitudes to foreign language learning"). This historical element to the design is vital given the intention to seek ways of testing whether and where the profile of student attitudes has or has not changed. Other key research includes studies of inner-city Leeds students of German by Chambers (1999) and the work of Stables and Wikeley (1985 and 1995).

The APU research questionnaire referred to in this study represents the empirical findings of work involving 1538 pupils in 1985 - clearly a different population to those of 1998-2001 West Essex language learners in this localised study.

The APU study was the last attempt to conduct empirical research on such a large scale. Only the attitudinal work of Philips & Clark (1988) and Filmer-Sankey (1989), as part of the OXPROD programme and Chambers (1994 & 1999 Lingua funded project) comes anywhere near to replicating its efforts. None of this work would claim to imitate the scale and breadth of the APU, yet the latter is considered a significant reference point for these and other more recent research. Why is it such an important benchmark?

One answer might be that the findings offered from 1983-5 a series of snapshots (in several GCE subjects including MFL) on the condition of the subject seen from the customers' point of view. For the first time, practitioners of languages were offered an insight into the thinking of 13-14 year old pupils nationally. It is difficult to underestimate the impact of a report that quantified the level of like/dislike of recognisable classroom activities for young practitioners grappling with the dynamics of MFL teaching.

Secondly, the optimism in the conclusions and evident in the commentaries on the report's findings has unwittingly provided a contrast to less optimistic, more recent studies. The APU conclusions may be said to represent a target for today's more

embattled MFL comprehensive schoolteachers when referring to the halcyon days of the pre-National Curriculum classroom. More importantly, it represents a measuring tool by which later researchers can update findings of an earlier decade to ones, which reflect the realities determined by the changes that have characterised the intervening years.

Despite all these changes, the focus and shape of the APU attitude questionnaires have withstood the test of time. Languages, as seen by the students, may not have changed as much as one might think. Chambers (1999) notes, when referring to the most liked and disliked activities that the APU findings "are for the most part the same for today as they were for the mid-1980s". The tasks, referred to in the APU questionnaire, have much in common with those outlined in the PoS; the attitude questions are similarly broad in definition. Only the lack of any ICT reference in the questionnaire would prevent its use as a means of measuring attitudes in today's classrooms. The attitude section in chapter seven of the APU report that covered the same fundamental questions that concern this work, is too important a body of evidence to ignore and must play a key role in any historical review.

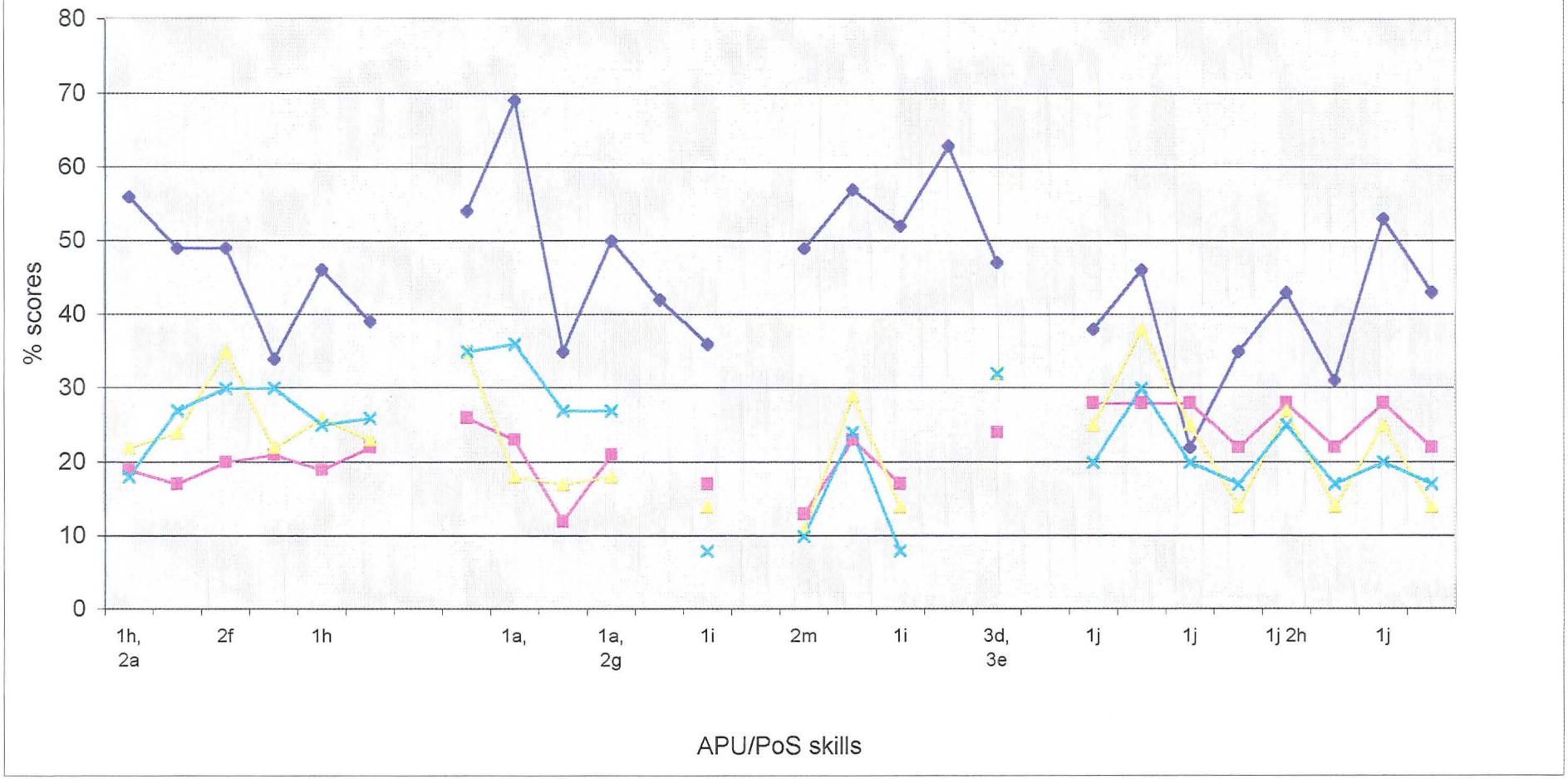
Nevertheless, the way in which the findings can be used must be carefully defined. Any direct comparison between the 1998-2001 data with that from schools of two decades ago is virtually impossible except in broad terms. At the time of the APU research the three schools were well-established 11-18 comprehensives in and around Harlow Newtown with significantly higher 11-16 school populations than at present but with a relatively constant socio-economic background to well-defined and agreed catchment areas. Relatively liberal option schemes at 13 and 14 annually more than halved the number of pupils studying Languages to public examination. At the time of the APU research schools were yet to introduce the GCSE and a National Curriculum entitlement to KS4 Languages.

Expectations in the MFL classroom were also very different. The clearest example of this was the level of TL used by both staff and pupils. Whilst Chambers correctly points out that many of the APU listed MFL activities would not go unrecognised in contemporary classrooms, it is fair to assume a more even balance between the four skills in 2002 than in 1985. It is therefore statistically invalid to attempt to maintain that the 1985 Year 9 of School 1 (when it took part in the APU tests in the early 1980's) can be compared with the 1998-9 Year 9 participants in this study using measurement

systems of the day. Furthermore, the APU research reported on the final school year (Year 9) prior to the option process while this study tracks a more-able Year 9 set that continued MFL study into KS4.

And yet, is it feasible, therefore, despite the differences in population, expectations and methods of measurement (such as task descriptors), to compare the responses of more-able students to the 1985 APU questionnaire and to those in this study? Given the difficulties outlined above the task is unlikely to prove possible. Attempts to find a consistency in the correlation between liked and disliked activities in APU data and similar measurements from the PoS in this study by using cross-tabulation and scattergrams were singularly unsuccessful. See table 7.

Table 7. Comparison of mean % scores of positive responses with those of APU (1985)
BGS (Sch. 1), STJ (Sch. 2), MHS (Sch. 3)



In the Table 7 there are some possible matches between students' responses to classroom activities defined by APU (in the form of mean percentage scores of positive responses) and those defined by the PoS, but there is no pattern of correlation. There is a greater correlation between measurements between schools in the sample than between the sample and the 1985 APU. The activities or subsets cannot therefore be said to resemble each other or contrast with each other in any consistent way. Beyond these methodological concerns it is important to record the dramatic differences in the positive responses of MFL students in 1985 compared to their 1998-2001 counterparts. This is discussed later in the work in the findings in section 5.2.11.

The APU study and its findings must therefore play a more restricted role in this work. Its methodology and conclusions, for reasons given above, can inform this study from a reference point that might occasionally provide a wider resonance to the findings of this study, but it cannot stand alongside the data collected here in any attempt to acquire comparative validity. Its principal role will be to provide an historical framework to the research design and findings. Any comparisons between APU and more contemporary data must be considered in this context.

4.11 Data gathering process

I earlier outlined why attitudinal work requires the asking of multiple questions of the sample to get an angle on unobservable variables. This study is therefore by its nature data rich and it is now appropriate to inform the reader how the data were gathered and catalogued.

The data were collected from the subset over three years from 1998-2001 using one questionnaire (*Ques1*) followed by taped discussions in Year 9 and two questionnaires (*Ques1 & Ques2*) in Year 10. In the final Year 11 one questionnaire (*Ques3*) and directed interviews were used. Parts of and earlier work from an Action Research project in 1995-6 collected under the same conditions as *Ques1* were also used. Throughout the process the author adhered to the code of research outlined in 2.15. Permission was sought in advance of all participants to quote anonymously and without prejudice data and contributions from questionnaires and interviews.

Questionnaire 1:

Ques1 (see Table 8 overleaf) was devised to categorise student responses to the 35 statements from Part 1 of the 1997-8 National Curriculum Programme of Study (PoS). The research focussed on activities in sections 1, 2 and 3 only ("Communicating in the Target Language", "Language Skills" and "Language Learning Skills and Knowledge of Language"). Section 4 was excluded from the study for reasons of accessibility. For, many students during the piloting of *Ques1* perceived the five elements of this section to be more distant from the regular activities undertaken in MFL lessons (e.g. "Come into contact with native speakers in this country and, where possible, abroad."), or less amenable to being presented as discrete tasks ("Consider their own culture and compare with the cultures of the countries and communities where the TL is spoken").

The questionnaires were explained to sample Year 9 and 10 classes at prearranged meetings in three West Essex 11-16 Comprehensive Schools. The venue was always the timetabled MFL classroom although the furniture was rearranged to facilitate the gathering of data.

The schools had been chosen on the basis of a) proximity to each other, b) history of curricular co-operation and c) homogeneity (in terms of socio-economic groups, school type, choice of Languages, truancy rates, incidence of free-school meals, GCSE results and other league table statistics). See Chapter 3 for more details of schools and sample data.

The questionnaire elicits one of five types of single phrase responses following the pattern set by the APU studies of 1983-5. The categories used follow the pattern used by APU and are clearly relative terms. They are used here because they are readily identifiable by students and staff and this is the most convenient method of organising hundred of measurements of student responses. Any subsequent use of terms such as "Like" or "Dislike", "positive" or "negative" will require further contextualisation. At this point it is perhaps appropriate to note the relative nature of such terms, which is dealt with more fully in Chapters 5 & 6.

SECTION 1. COMMUNICATING IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE.						
	LIKE A LOT	LIKE	NOT SURE	DISLIKE	DISLIKE A LOT	
A						
B						
C						
D						
E						
F						
G						
H						
I						
J						
K						

SECTION 2 -LANGUAGE SKILLS.						
	LIKE A LOT	LIKE	NOT SURE	DISLIKE	DISLIKE A LOT	
A						
B						
C						
D						
E						
F						
G						
H						
I						
J						
K						
L						
M						
N						
O						

3. LANGUAGE LEARNING SKILLS / KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE						
	LIKE A LOT	LIKE	NOT SURE	DISLIKE	DISLIKE A LOT	
A						
B						
C						
D						
E						
F						
G						
H						
I						

Table 8. *Ques1* Student Response format

The researcher explains how the data are important in that they might help future local planning and thanks the students in advance. A statement is then made to the group in the stratified sample emphasising the "young adult" status of the group and the need to be true to personal feelings/attitudes and beliefs. There is sufficient maturity in the upper sets to respond to their "young adult" status. This image is projected to the sample

to encourage a positive response towards the collection of accurate data. The sentiment expressed in "To thine own self be true" finds a resonance in most teenage minds and is used by the researcher to underline the importance of non-collaboration in the exercise. Continual references to the sample as young adults who know their own minds will obviate the want or need to check their responses against those of others. Pupils are nevertheless seated at separate desks to minimise collaboration and asked to respond individually to the skills presented by the classroom teacher and researcher by selecting one of the 5 boxes that best represents their views.

The staff and/or teacher researcher then describe the skill represented in the PoS. Frequently this involves changing the descriptor from the PoS into more accessible language for 13-15 year-old students. In addition, typical tasks are described that could portray the skill and which the regular teacher feels are undertaken in class and recognised by the pupils. To improve standardisation between the samples the skills/activities are explained by the researcher after consultation with the teacher and only the most common examples of each skill typical for that set are chosen.

Some parts of the PoS are self-evident and little illustration is required. For example Section 1(a) that asks students to communicate in pairs and groups is often immediately recognised as an integral part of many MFL lessons and there is often little clarification sought. Section 1(b) by contrast (*Use language for real purposes as well as to practise skills*) is perhaps less accessible. Here examples provided included arriving late to lessons and being asked for a reason in the TL by the teacher. Students were also asked how they might respond to being expected to report a friend feeling sick during the lesson using the TL or explain a lack of homework. Most skills/activities were recognised by students without difficulty and very few asked questions of their regular teacher or the researcher. However, some aspects of the PoS did cause some difficulty for a variety of reasons. 1k: (*use a range of resources for communicating, eg telephone, electronic mail, fax, letters*) was greeted with common confusion (and some derision) given the paucity of ICT provision in MFL in the three schools. Equally, 3h (*understand and use formal and informal language*) revealed a general confusion about such linguistic customs that needs to be addressed.

In subsequent visits to each school the researcher is recognised but the same procedures as those described above are used.

The incidence for each category of the PoS is tabulated for each sample set in each school in each of the two years 9-10. The measurements are plotted as bar charts using Excel and are then compared.

These graphs form a principal source of data. A table of results from School 1 is in section 5.1. together with a summary of results from all schools. The remaining graphs are stored in the appendices. Sections taken from these graphs are included in the text to illustrate specific points.

In addition the individual responses of each student are recorded as a score. For this the weighting system from APU is used in which one point is allotted to the most negative response ("Dislike a lot"), two points to the "Dislike" response, three points for the neutral response ("Not sure/don't know"). Four points were awarded for each "Like" response with a full five points given for the "Like a lot" response. A high score indicated therefore a more positive view and a low score a more negative view with 105 points (35x3) representing a notional average score. A high score of, for example, 120 would indicate the respondent perceived MFL study to be a relatively rewarding and enjoyable/successful activity. Similarly a score of <100 might indicate a more negative view of MFL study. The scores including the mean were recorded in graph format and comparisons made between 1998-9 and 1999-2000 (Years 9 and 10 of the sample).

At further informal meetings with small sample groups in the same schools, pupils were presented with the PoS and questionnaire, as a prompt to discussion, and encouraged to seek further explanations of the skills and clarification of phrases and expressions used by the researcher. The classroom teacher made the choice of representative pupils after consultation with the researcher. It was emphasised here that the students would be representing the views of an already stratified group and therefore should be chosen for the a readiness to express their views. The sample comprised three types of student based on their responses to *Ques1*. One third comprised students offering mainly anticipated positive responses to the work, a second third was made up of students likely to offer a more negative view and a final group was composed of those offering a more neutral view. They were not required to complete the questionnaire. The importance of their views is stressed and ethics of qualitative research are explained.

Tape recordings are made of the interviews using a plate microphone presented to the students but then positioned out of view.

Members of staff are briefed at meetings organised initially through the Harlow Continuity and Progression Committee (This later became the "West Essex Action Research" [WEAR] during the first year of this study). Significance is placed on the outcomes of the research and it is underlined that by assisting in the research, schools within the consortium will receive valuable insights into areas of teaching and learning. Subsequent development might consider the development of a local course, which would help frame future Key Stage 3 & 4 MFL planning. In the first year of the study, teachers of the sample classes were asked to indicate how they think their students feel about activities/skills contained in the PoS document. These results are cross-tabulated with those of the students.

The same process is repeated with the same students in Year 10 using *Ques1* as the principal means of data collection and the changes are then tracked. Staff are excluded from the second questionnaire.

Ques2 is presented to the same Year 10 students on a separate occasion. See Table 9 overleaf. The taped group interviews are replaced by individual directed interviews in Year 11 and Questionnaires 3 is also given to the students prior to the interviews.

Questionnaire 2 (Reduced from font size 14 and arial font)

YEAR 10 QUESTIONNAIRE

SCHOOL..... CLASS ..... . DATE ..../. ./ BOY / GIRL

1. Has secondary school been as good *I* not so good as you expected it would be?

Indicate on the scale how you feel:

Better than expected *What I had expected* *Not so good as expected*

1 2 3 4

2. **Have the subjects been as good *I* not so good as you expected they would be?**
Indicate how you feel by using this scale:

Better than expected *What I had expected* *Not so good as expected*
1 2 3 4

Subject	***Better than expected***	***What I had expected***		***Not so good as expected***
Maths	1	2	3	4
English	1	2	3	4
MFL (French / German)	1	2	3	4
Geography	1	2	3	4
History	1	2	3	4
RE	1	2	3	4
Science	1	2	3	4
PE/Sport	1	2	3	4
Technology	1	2	3	4
Art	1	2	3	4

Add any other reasons you want to:

....

.....

3. What do you enjoy *most* about coming to school?

4. What do you enjoy *least* about coming to school?

5. Think about all your subjects. Which two do you regard as the *most useful?*

....

6. Which two subjects do you regard as the *least useful?*

....

7. Now list these typical subjects <u>in order of importance</u>.
(Place a number in the box below that subject)

Maths	Eng	Science	Hums	Tech	MFL	Sport	Art	Drama

8. Please put a circle somewhere along the scale below to indicate how much you like German or French compared to all your other subjects:

MFL is my most preferred subject *MFL is my least preferred subject*

1 2 3 4

9. Please place a tick in the boxes to show your reasons for learning German / French:

"I am learning German / French because ..... "

	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
(a) *I think it will help me to get a better job.*			
(b) *I am interested in German / French people and their way of life.*			
(c) *It will allow me to meet and talk with more people in Europe.*			
(d) *An educated person should be able to speak a foreign language.*			
	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
(e) *I enjoy it.*			
(f) *I'm forced to do it*			
(g) (other reasons)			

10. Have you ever truanted because of your German / French lesson? (Please circle your answer)

YES *NO*

11. Please tick the statement that <u>best</u> fits you:

❑ I try very hard in German / French lessons

❑ I try quite hard in German / French lessons

❑ I don't really try at all in German / French lessons

12. What does your teacher think?

❑ S/he thinks I try very hard in German / French lessons

❑ S/he thinks I try quite hard in German / French lessons

❑ S/he thinks I don't really try at all in German / French lessons

❑ I don't know what s/he thinks

13. Please tick the statement that best applies to you:

❑ I am making excellent progress in German / French

❑ I am doing well in German / French

❑ I am making satisfactory progress in German / French

❑ I am making poor progress in German / French

14. What does your teacher think?

❑ S/he thinks I am making excellent progress in German / French

❑ S/he thinks I am doing well in German / French

❑ S/he thinks I am making satisfactory progress in German / French

❑ S/he thinks I am making poor progress in German / French

❑ I don't know what s/he thinks

15. Tick <u>all</u> the statements that apply to you:

❑ I want to take German / French at college (16-18)

❑ I want to speak German / French well enough to get a job abroad

❑ I am working towards a good GCSE grade

- ❑ I want to give it up the first chance I can get
- ❑ I haven't really thought about it
- ❑ I don't care about German / French because I am no good at it

16. **How do you feel when your teacher speaks to the class in German / French?**
(Tick any of the following that apply:)

- ❑ It is interesting and it makes you concentrate
- ❑ You learn more
- ❑ It can be difficult but I try to answer when I can
- ❑ It puts me off because I can't always understand

17. **How do you feel when your teacher asks you to speak in German / French?**
(Tick any of the following that apply:)

- ❑ It is interesting and it makes you concentrate
- ❑ You learn more
- ❑ It can be difficult but I try when I can
- ❑ It puts me off

18. If I had the opportunity to change the amount of German / French that is taught in our school, I would .....

- ❑ increase the number of lessons
- ❑ keep the number of lessons as it is
- ❑ decrease the number of lessons

19. I believe a language should be:

- ❑ taught to all pupils
- ❑ taught only to those pupils who wish to learn it
- ❑ taught only to the end of year 9
- ❑ dropped altogether from school

20. Have you ever been to a foreign country?

YES *NO*

Which one/s? .....

21. Choose one of the foreign countries you have visited.
Now complete the following sentence by saying what the people were like there:

The people in ..... were .....

22. What did you like most about the country you visited?

23. What did you like least about the country you visited?

24. Which other country would you like to visit? .....

Why? .....

25. If the language of that country was not English, would you try to learn it before you went?

YES *NO*

26. Would you consider trying to get a job in a foreign country when you leave school?

YES *NO*

27. Here are some words used to describe people from other countries:

polite - pleasant - friendly - interesting - fashionable - clever - rich - ambitious - pushy - unpleasant - loud - unfriendly - impolite - ignorant

Now complete the following sentences by using these words.
(You can use your own words if you want to).

I think German people are .....

because .....

I think French people are .....

because .....

I think British people are .....

because .....

28. After GCSE, I will probably .....

- ❑ try to use my German / French as much as possible
- ❑ try to use my German / French a little
- ❑ try to forget what I've learnt

29. How often have you come across a situation where it would have been useful to be able to speak German / French?

(Please tick one). ☐ *occasionally* ☐ *rarely* ☐ *never*

30. How much German / French do your parents know?

(Circle a number on the scale to indicate what you think)

Lots		*Some*		*None*
1	2		3	4

31. How much do your parents encourage you to learn German / French?

Very much		*A little*		*Not at all*
1	2		3	4

32. Have you ever had the opportunity to hear German / French outside school? (circle your answer)

YES *NO*

33. Do you know any people who speak German / French as their mother tongue?

YES *NO*

34. Has your opinion of German / French changed since Year 7?

YES *NO*

35. If so, how?

36. Please add anything you feel is important, which I have left out.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Table 9. *Ques2*-student questionnaire.

Questionnaire 2 (Ques2) was given to each of the three subsets in Year 10.

The design of *Ques2* is crucial if any degree of triangulation is to occur. For reasons of internal validity that are considered in *Study Design* it was decided to base the construction of the questions on an established and tested questionnaire used in previous attitudinal research into MFL. This would reduce the time allocated to trialling a new format of questions within the two years allocated to this stage of the study and help maintain the discriminative power of a well-designed survey and so a debt of gratitude is acknowledged to the work of Chambers (1999). The Year 9 (13 year olds) Questionnaire was therefore used and piloted with 3 parallel sets to the sample. As a result of this and subsequent tutorial advice the questions were reduced from 50 to 35 whilst preserving the integrity of the original sections. Evidence from the pilot suggested 50 questions took the groups on average 15-20 minutes to complete and led to respondent fatigue. Indeed many students added unflattering comments in the margins regarding the onerous nature of answering so many questions. The resulting modifications took this into account and also included adapting the school subjects in question 2 to feature more locally recognisable ones e.g. Drama, Humanities. Questions on MFL activities in languages were also deleted for reasons of duplication in *Ques1* and planned interviews.

The design of the questionnaire aimed to explore the pupils' attitudes towards MFL as suggested by the constructs in *Ques1*. These issues are then analysed within the context of the wider problematic field defined by earlier empirical studies referred to in the literature review and discussions with colleagues in the pilot schools.
These included:

- Secondary school experiences in other subjects
- Perceptions of useful/least useful school subjects
- The position of MFL in the popular-unpopular continuum
- Reasons for learning a MFL
- Use of the foreign language in the classroom and outside school
- Perceptions of parents' and teachers' views
- When to stop studying a MFL
- Views on other Europeans

Unlike *Ques1* that asked respondents to catalogue responses to descriptions of classroom events presented by the teacher/researcher, this aspect of the survey had to follow more closely the pattern of self-completion questionnaires. The design therefore aimed to engage the students' interest and co-operation considering the intended audience of more-able linguists. It sought to achieve this by using challenging themes presented by unambiguous, non-leading or contentious statements and by a balance of responses and simple scoring systems. This gave respondents the opportunity to record answers quickly (Likert scale, tick box and circles) but also, in a third of the questions to expand on this using open-ended questions with text frames. The predominance of tick-box responses enabled the students to move at pace through the 36 questions in 8-10 minutes to avoid respondent boredom and fatigue. Font size 14, highlighted text, italics, boxes and charts were all used to increase the clarity of presentation.

Five of the 36 questions used a 1-4 Likert scale for statements such as "MFL is my most preferred subject". This forced the respondents to err towards points 2 or 3 on the four-point scale when considering a neutral position and enabled the researcher to categorise the more uncertain responses as inclining towards a more positive or negative view. This was vital if subsequent analysis of the data was to employ weighting systems.

Eight questions employed a defined response such as *YES/NO* or *AGREE/NOT SURE/DISAGREE*. Twelve responses were open-ended, although in some cases answers were guided by a text frame, for example, *"I think French people are* ..... (list of adjectives supplied) *because* ....."
The remaining questions comprised a series of graduating statements (e.g. *rarely/ occasionally/ often*) to which respondents were invited to tick the box of the appropriate statement.
The results were then classified using the following categories and scoring system:
See Table 10 overleaf.

Topic	Question number(s)
School experiences years 7-11	1-4
MFL ranking in terms of popularity compared to other KS4 subjects	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8
reasons for learning MFL	9, 25, 26
perceived levels of success in MFL	10-14
use of the target language in the classroom	16-17
whether MFL should be studied by all students aged14-16	18-19
views of other Europeans	20-24, 27
future plans that may involve MFL	25-28
experience of MFL outside school	29-33
levels of parental support, student perceptions of parents' and teachers' views	14, 30-3

Table 10. *Ques2* categories and scoring system.

The variables were pre-classified using the following criteria:

Question	Response mode(s)	Data type	Scoring system including postcoded variables
1, 2, 8, 30, 31,	Scaled 1-4	Interval	The Ques1 & 3 weighting factor would not help the analysis as variables were not cyclical/looped. Percentages of the total responses in each category were used.
3	Fill in. Open-ended with postcoded variables.	Nominal.	• Social (meeting friends etc.) • Enjoyable subjects/Need for achievement
4			• Procedural/quotidian (uniform, punctuality, routines etc.) • Difficult/unenjoyable lessons • teachers
20			• Europe • Asia • Americas • Africa • Australasia
21, 27			• Positive • unclear • negative
24			• Europe(France/Germany recorded as discrete items) • Asia • Americas • Africa • Australasia
5, 6,	checklist	Closed, categorical	Record MFL only
7	Ranked	Ordinal	The MFL rank only was noted
9,11-19 (excl. 15) 28-9	Scaled 1-3, 1-4. 1-5, 1-6	Interval	Percentages
10, 25-6, 32-4	Yes/no	Categorical exclusive	Frequency of opinion recorded

Table 11. *Ques2* results classification criteria.

Results were tabulated and conclusions drawn. These were compared with other areas of the study notably *Questionnaire3* and the interviews.

Questionnaire 3 uses the same 36-statement questionnaire delivered by APU to the sub-sample of 1500 students in 1985. This is logical given the need to triangulate data on attitudinal variables and the need to save time in the design of longitudinal trend studies. Secondly this paper aims to use APU data as a means of measuring the proximity or distance between current attitudes to MFL among more-able students in West Essex with those that may have prevailed in 1985. The precise role of APU comparisons is set out in 4.6.

The age of this questionnaire would initially also raise the issue of relevancy to current MFL students. However, the broad, open-ended nature of the APU questions that is often typical in attitudinal data-collection, lengthens its shelf life and makes its use appropriate today. All the variables (usefulness, enjoyment, difficulty and contact with the foreign community) are elements recognised by contemporary students and teachers in terms that are still accessible to students. More significantly, these issues form part of the wider problematic field in research terms and support this investigation.

Questionnaire 3 was taken directly from the APU Report of 1985. Chapter 7 details the design and construction of the attitude questionnaire. Part B contained a list of 36 statements. There was a balance of positive and negative relating to reactions to learning a MFL (including perceived usefulness, enjoyment and difficulty) and contact with the foreign community. Re-formulations of key questions were used to avoid "response set". Pupils responded to a five point scale (*strongly agree / agree / neutral / disagree / strongly disagree*). This rubric was highlighted at the top of each page of *Questionnaire 3* with the following further clarifications *"absolutely true / partly or probably true/ in doubt/ partly or probably false / absolutely false".*

A scoring system of 1-5 points was then added in which, for each scale, a high score indicated a positive view and a low score a negative. A high score out of, for example, 55 (from the 11 questions measuring responses to "usefulness" or out of 40 for "enjoyment") would indicate the respondent perceived MFL study to be a relatively rewarding and enjoyable activity.
All the results from all three schools, though recorded separately, were grouped together and plotted against those of the APU. Each of the student's scores for usefulness,

enjoyment, difficulty and contact with the foreign community was recorded on a chart and compared to scores form APU and conclusions drawn. See *Findings.*

Questionnaire 3 (reduced from font size 14 and landscape format)

QUES 3 **Respond to the following questions by placing a tick in the box, which best describes what you think.** School ..... Date .....

E.g. if you think it is absolutely true that French / German is one of your favourite lessons tick the "Strongly agree" box, if is probably or partly true tick the "agree" box. If, however, the statement is probably or partly false tick the "disagree", if you think it is absolutely false tick the "strongly disagree". If you are in doubt then tick the "neutral". Use the key below to remind yourself.

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Absolutely true	*Probably or partly true*	*In doubt*	*Partly or probably false*	*Absolutely false*
1. French / German is one of my favourite lessons				
2. There are many more important things to learn in school than French / German				
3. I would like to go to France / Germany				
4. I think my parents are pleased I'm learning French / German				
5. I don't want to do any more French / German after this year				
6. I think I try quite hard in French / German				
7. French / German is one of the easiest lessons				
8. I would like to stay with a French / German family.				
9. I find French / German more difficult than other subjects				
10. I don't like French / German because I'm no good at it.				
11. French / German will be useful to me after I leave school.				

12. Learning French / German is a waste of time.				
13. I would like to be able to speak several foreign languages				
14. I'd like to get a job where I could use my French / German.				
15. I am not interested in learning foreign languages.				
16. I am better at French / German than at other subjects				
17. I am not interested in going to France / Germany				

18. I like French / German most of the time				
19. I think it's a good idea to have a French / German penfriend				
20. French / German is too difficult to understand.				
21. I like learning new words				
22. My teacher thinks I don't try very hard in French / German				
23. It puts me off when the teacher speaks to me in French / German				
24. French / German is easy if you try				

25. I would like to have a French / German boy or girl to stay.				
26. I find it hard to remember the words in French / German				
27. I don't need French / German for what I want to do.				
28. I enjoy French / German because it seems easy.				
29. I am not interested in learning about other countries				
30. I'm no good at French / German.				
31. I enjoy other lessons more than French / German				
32. I would like to meet some French / German people.				
33. French / German is usually boring.				
34. I'm quite good at French / German				
35. French / German is no use to me as I don't want to go to France / Germany.				
36. I think it would feel strange staying with a French / German family.				

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Table 12. *Ques3*-student questionnaire.

The study must attempt to relate the findings from *Questionnaire 1* to the other methods of data collection to triangulate the findings of the study. This is attempted in the next two chapters.

Structured Interviews

The interviews provided the opportunity to support, reject or qualify the findings from *Questionnaires 1, 2 and 3* and taped group interviews using methodological triangulation. They also offered an opportunity to explore apparent anomalies between schools.

The interview schedule followed a five-step format of:

1. Introduction and ethics (non-attributability)
2. Warm-up. Explanation of term "continuum" used in *Ques3* (that respondents had already completed and could comment on)
3. Main body of questions on *Ques1* attributes for likes/dislikes and other variables (see below)
4. "Cool-off" questions on finishing GCSE course
5. Closure/thank you.

Structured Interviews Format and Schedule

Here are some activities that students think are popular and enjoyable and others that are less so. How would you rate them using the following scale of 1-4?
(Show the interviewee the following chart and explain idea of a continuum).

1 *(Dislike)*	2 *(unsure)*	3 *(like)*	4

1. Rate the following 1- 4. Why do you like / dislike the activity described?

Section 1

Descriptor	PoS	Focus	Rating	Reason(s)
Communicate in pairs & with the teacher, develop their understanding and skills through a range of language activities, *eg games, role-play, surveys and other investigations;* Use everyday classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech;	1a & 1c 1e 2g	Using TL in pairwork. Confidence building opportunities. Controlling pace of work spontaneity		

initiate and develop conversations;				
Ask about meanings, seek clarification or repetition; Use language for real purposes Develop strategies for dealing with the unpredictable	2c 1b 3i	Using TL in class speaking work with Teacher/FLA in front of peers/adults. Age of FLA		
discuss their own ideas, interests and experiences and compare them with those of others; express agreement, disagreement, personal feeling and opinions	f 2h	growing independence, exercising control in learning process		
read or view for personal interest and enjoyment, as well as for information;	g	Controlling pace of learning, reading without recording answers		
listen and respond to different types of spoken language;	h	Fast pace of listening material represents challenge/ achievement		
produce a variety of types of writing summarise and report the main points of spoken or written texts	j 2m	Preferred types of writing. Preference for simple and mundane as confidence building.		Lists, short notes longer messages (letters, descriptions), accounts/narratives
use a range of resources for communicating, *eg telephone, electronic mail, fax, letters.*	k	New technology		

Section 2

understand and apply patterns, rules exceptions in language forms and structures; Understand and use formal and informal language; describe and discuss present, past and future	3f 3h 2i	Using grammar and applying to different contexts. Challenge and attributes of past failure rates		

events;				
skim and scan texts, including databases where appropriate, for information;	j	Pace of learning, reading without recording answers		
copy words, phrases and sentences; redraft their writing to improve its accuracy and presentation, *e.g. by word-processing*	k, n	Preferred types of writing. New technology. See 1j above.		

Section 3

learn by heart phrases and short extracts, *e.g. rhymes, poems, songs, jokes, tongue twisters;*	a	KS3 methods in KS4		
use dictionaries and reference materials;	d	Accuracy. Pace of learning		
use context and other clues to interpret meaning; use their knowledge to experiment with language.	e g	Speculating, taking risks		

2. What are your opinions of France and the French / Germany and the Germans?

Negative unsure / neutral positive

(an unsure/neutral vote might indicate a lack of contact and a lack of integrative motivation see Ques2)

3. Where would MFL be in a ranking of your subjects from your favourite (1) to your least favourite (8)?

4. **Do you really enjoy MFL? Enough to consider studying MFL 16-18?** *(only 10% would admit to really enjoying MFL-Chambers, is this true in upper sets?)*

1 absolutely 2 probably 3 unsure 4 probably not 5 absolutely not

5. How useful are your subjects? Where would MFL be in a ranking of your subjects from the most useful (1) to the least useful (8)?

6. **Has you attitude to MFL changed since Year 9?**
Better? Unsure? or Worse?

7. **Which is more important in your opinion (a) enjoying the subject you study or (b) getting a good result in the subject?**
(instrumental motivation/need for achievement)

8. **How difficult would you rate French/German compared with your other GCSE subjects?**

Easier unsure about the same more difficult

Table 13. Structured Interviews format and schedule.

The elements investigated in Question 1 were:

- Using TL in pairwork. Opportunities for student to control pace of work.
- Using TL in class speaking work with Teacher/FLA in front of peers/adults
- Growing independence and exercising control in learning process
- Reading without recording answers
- Fast pace of listening material representing challenge/achievement
- Preferred types of writing (preference for simpler/mundane as confidence enhancing).
- New technology
- Using grammar and applying it to different contexts.
- KS3 methods in KS4
- Accuracy (use of dictionary).
- Pace of learning
- Taking risks with language

The opportunity was taken with open questioning (e.g. question 5) for the interviewer to propose a possible reason for a particular construct. The ensuing response was recorded, as with respondent validation in ethnographic research.

The inclusion of scaled, fill-in and ranking response modes allowed the researcher to process the data more quickly. The interviews lasted no longer than ten minutes to ensure that fatigue did not lead to unnecessary duplication of views. The interviewees were made to feel they had made a positive contribution to school improvement.

Evidence from the interviews was organised according to the categories outlined above and compared with other data in the study. This is discussed in *Findings*.

4.12 Cross sectional study (1995-6)

1995-6 Action research project

The same method as with *Ques1* was used to gather data on students' responses to the PoS of one upper set in one school only. The same school (School 2) is included in this later study and both used the same criteria for selecting the MFL higher ability set.

As the *Ques1* questionnaire focuses often on skills contained in the National Curriculum, the researcher decided to prepare a second questionnaire which focussed exclusively on tasks /activities the students would recognise as those commonly performed in the MFL classroom. Many of the descriptions of the tasks follow more closely the questions asked of pupils by APU in the 1983-5 studies.

Like the original study the activities described were categorised in areas reflecting the 4 skills in MFL teaching (listening, speaking, reading and writing).
In the questionnaire pupils were asked to rank 12 activities, which they enjoyed from a list of 37. These results were compared with those from the first set of responses based on the National Curriculum skills and with the original APU findings and indications of areas of possible consensus were sought.

Three members of the MFL department were interviewed on tape and asked to outline how they thought their students felt about activities/skills contained in the National Curriculum document. Most welcomed the opportunity to reflect on their teaching and consider the views of their pupils. These results were compared with those of the students.

Finally six Year 10 pupils were interviewed and asked how they felt about the activities in class - especially areas where both questionnaires appeared to yield similar conclusions - and again comparisons made.

Given the areas of similarity in design between the two studies, attempts to triangulate findings will include references to this earlier study.

4.13 Towards triangulation

Robson (1993) observes:

> It is impossible to avoid the confounding effects of methods on our measurements. (p. 290)

In using evidence from one source in this study (for example the conclusions made from the observed measurements in *Ques1*) it is possible to delude oneself into thinking that the results represent a fixed pattern. Others might conclude from this that similar experiments with a similar field could produce similar results. Yet, this may not be true. Evidence taken from identical data-gathering procedures (*Ques1*) with parallel upper MFL sets and other upper sets from different cohorts not included in the field reveal similar but not identical results. The degree to which the measurements overlap with results of the sample sets is also inconsistent. It is therefore necessary to use other methods to cross reference results and to reduce *"inappropriate certainty"* (op. cit. p.290). The different methods and sources of data of this paper permit attempts at triangulation.

Robson and others contend that the bias inherent in measurements is "averaged out" when multiple methods are used. Exploring related, complementary issues alongside one central research question can also reduce it. The *complementary purposes model* thus allows researchers to triangulate findings and lessen bias by using a variety of methods. The variety of methods used in this study is designed to investigate complimentary issues related to one central research question. That is, primarily, are Languages perceived to be an increasingly less popular subject among more able 13-15 year-old linguists? And, secondly, what might be the possible reasons for this?

Multiple methods are also considered by Robson to "enhance interpretability" of, for example, quantitative measurements, and for this reason structured interviews are used by this researcher to support, refute or qualify findings from the questionnaires.

> For example, in a primarily quantitative study, the interpretation of statistical analyses may be enhanced by a qualitative narrative account. Conversely, a qualitative account may be the major outcome of a study but it can be enhance by supportive quantitative evidence used to buttress and perhaps clarify the account. (op. cit. p.291)

This study design has generated a plethora of information over the three-year time span. Using the same process across two years with *Ques1* ensured "Time triangulation". The tracked variables were also cross-referenced with data from an earlier cross-sectional study from 1995-6 that used identical data-gathering methods with a similar field as this study (Source triangulation). To avoid the problem of method-boundedness the findings were cross-referenced with data from subsequent questionnaires and interviews.

> When it (a construct) gets two alternative operational definitions, it is beginning to be evaluated. (Boring, 1953, pp. 169-84)

Methodological triangulation is, according to Denzin (1988, p.290), one of the most common in educational research together with the time triangulation offered by longitudinal studies. By using a multi-method approach (questionnaires, an analysis of teachers' views, interviews of both staff and pupils and cross tabulation with a separate cross-sectional action research project from 1996) it is likely some measure of triangulation has been achieved in the study.

CHAPTER 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

5.1 Data Analysis:

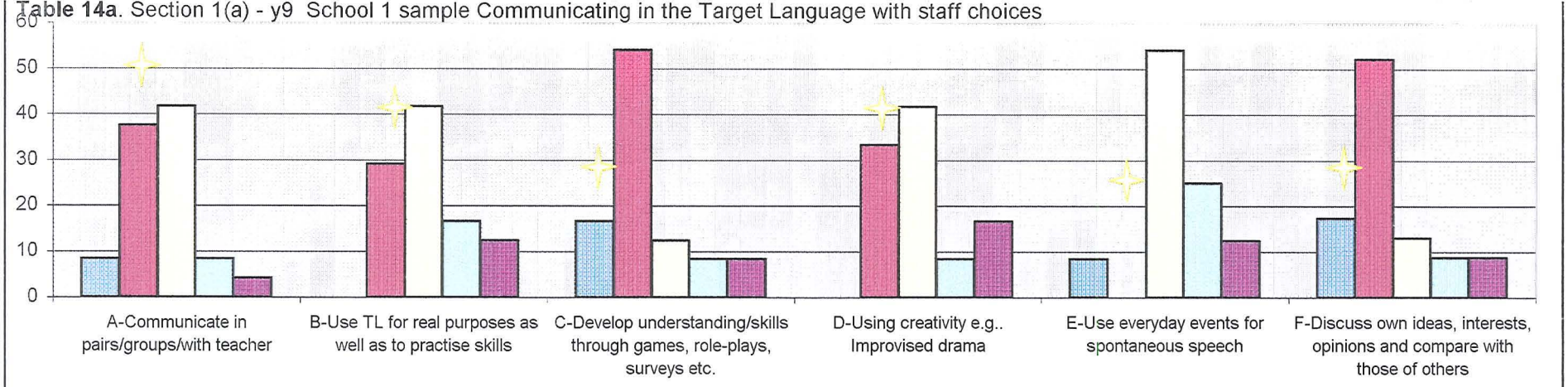
5.1.1 *Ques1* data: tracked changes and possible factors (School 1)

The reader will recall that *Ques1* was administered to the sample in Year 9 and to the same pupils in Year 10. The resulting charts and graphs extend to over thirty pages would disrupt a more lucid presentation of the argument. Accordingly, only the results from one school (School 1) appear here. The remainder of the graphs is to be found in the appendices.

Table 14a-e. *Ques1* results graphs from School 1.

(overleaf)

Table 14a. Section 1(a) - y9 School 1 sample Communicating in the Target Language with staff choices



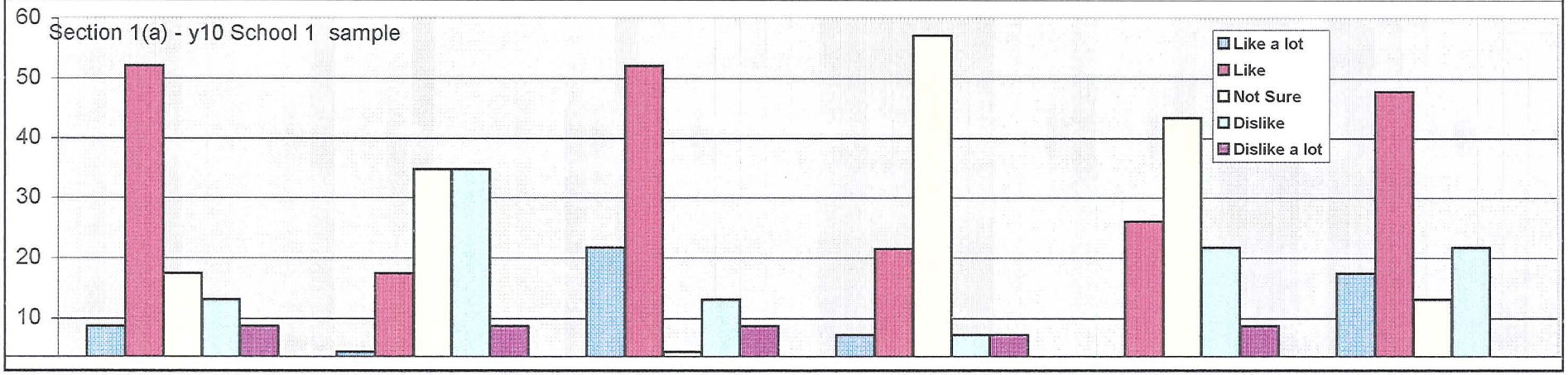
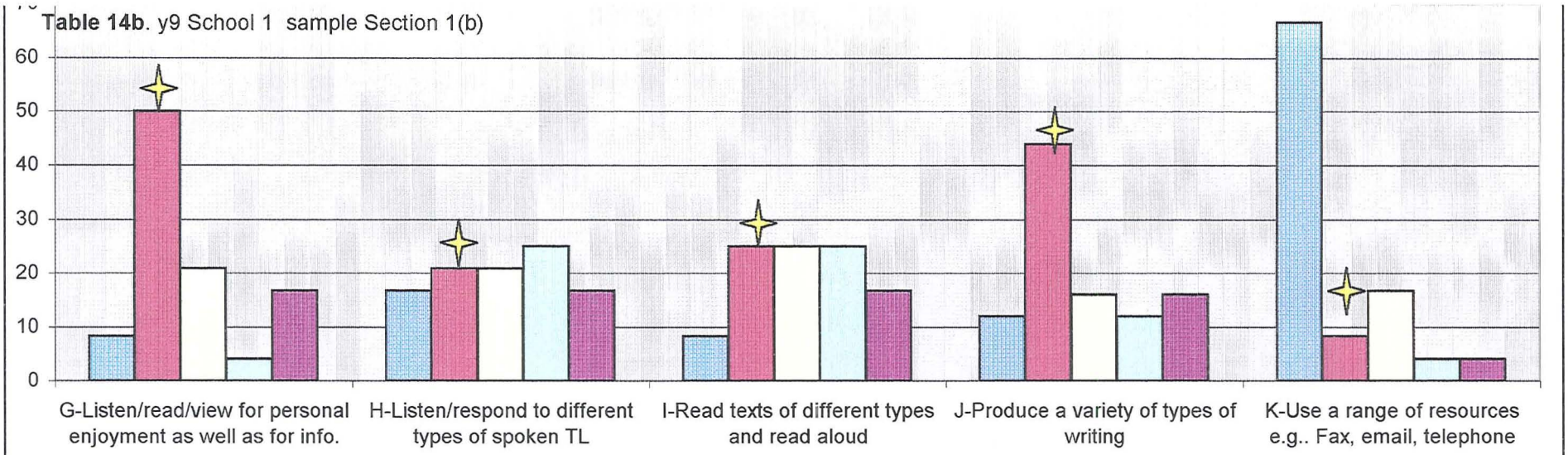
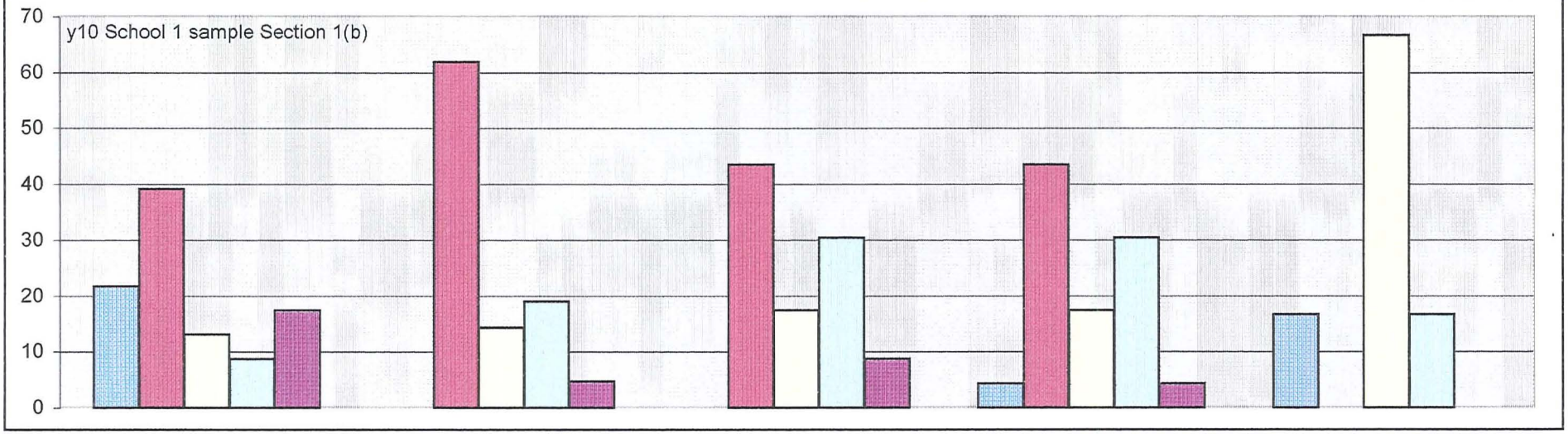


Table 14b. y9 School 1 sample Section 1(b)





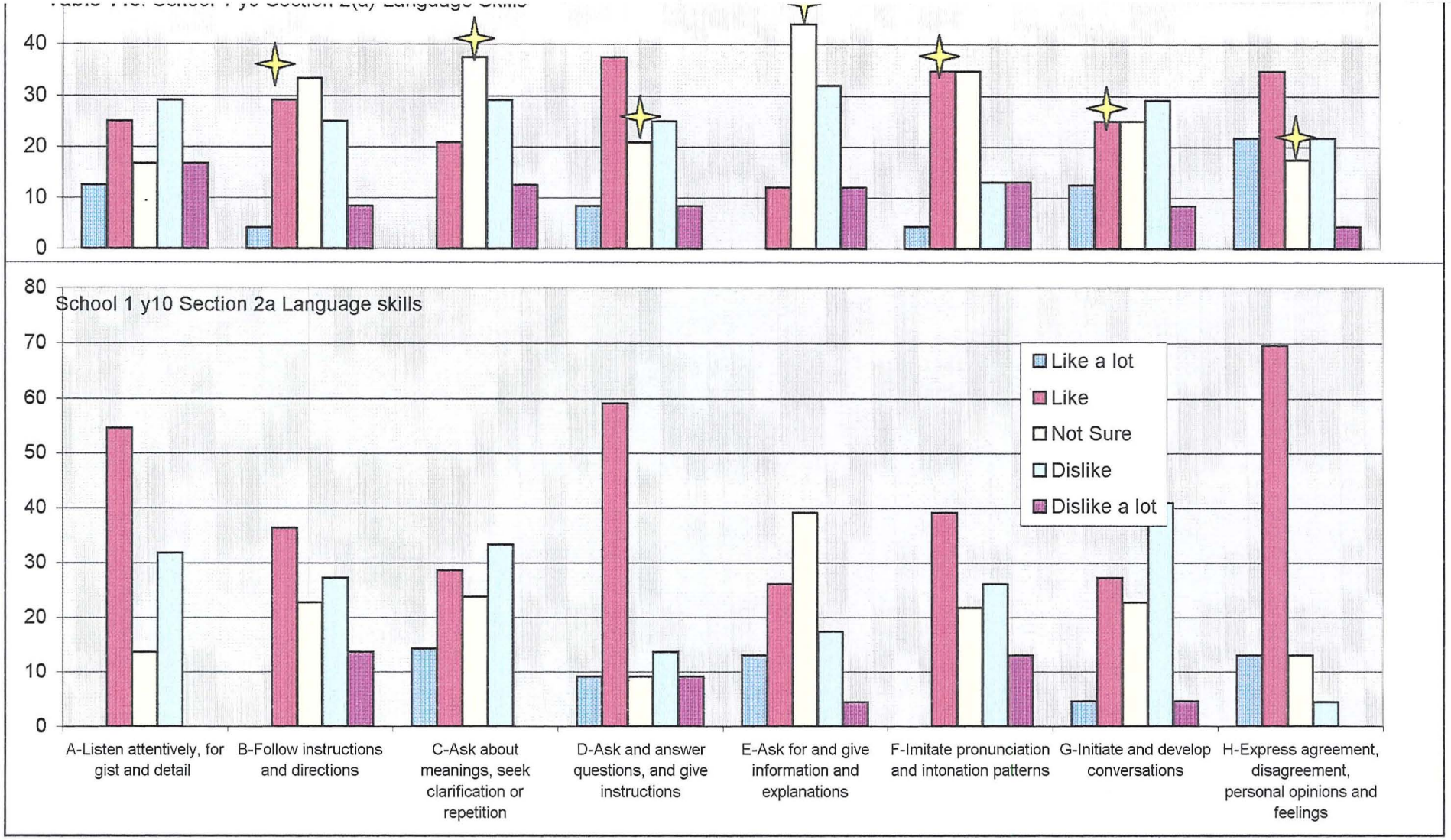

School 1 y10 Section 2a Language skills
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Like a lot
Like
Not Sure
Dislike
Dislike a lot
A-Listen attentively, for gist and detail
B-Follow instructions and directions
C-Ask about meanings, seek clarification or repetition
D-Ask and answer questions, and give instructions
E-Ask for and give information and explanations
F-Imitate pronunciation and intonation patterns
G-Initiate and develop conversations
H-Express agreement, disagreement, personal opinions and feelings

Table 14d. y9 School 1 sample Section 2(b)

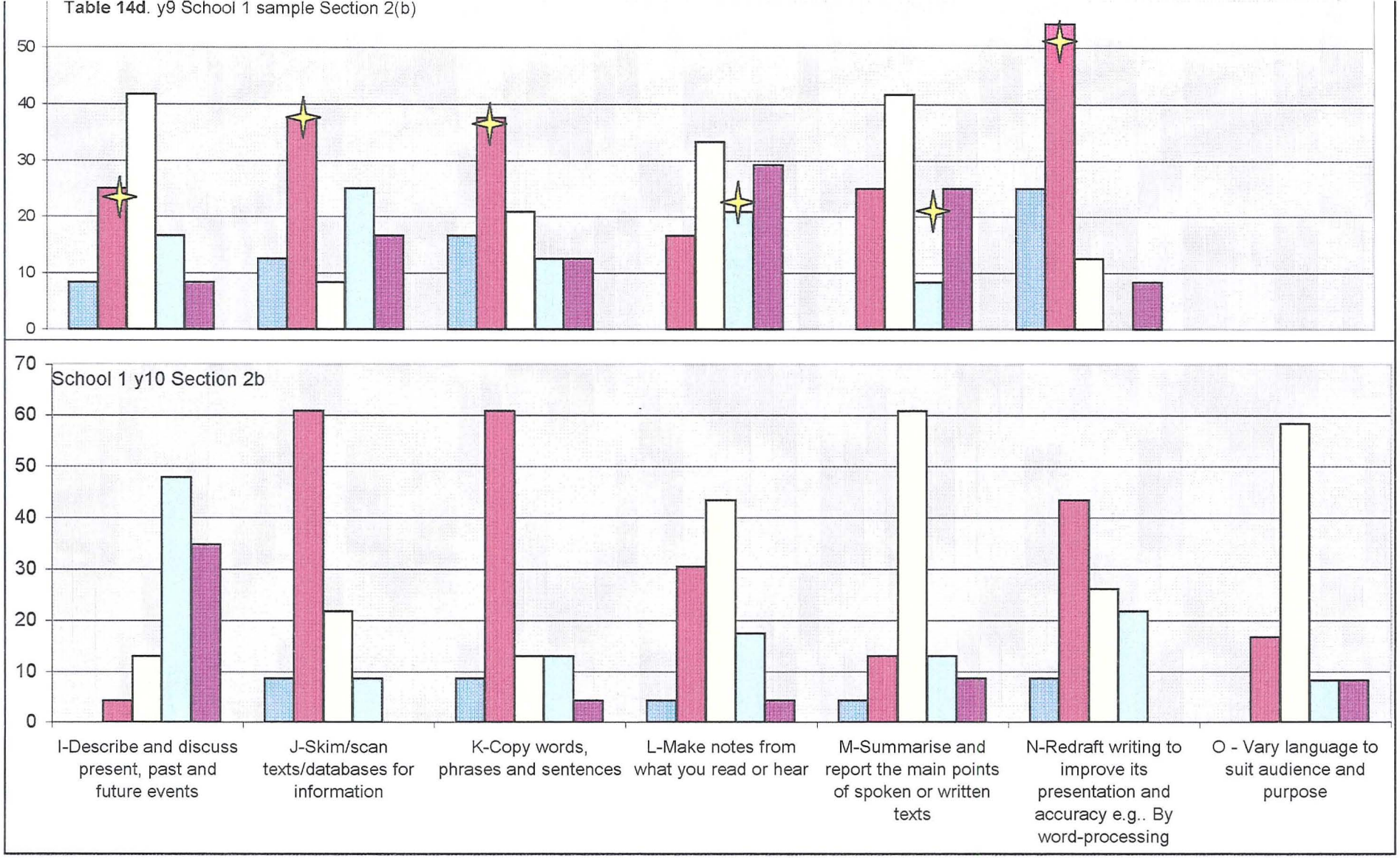
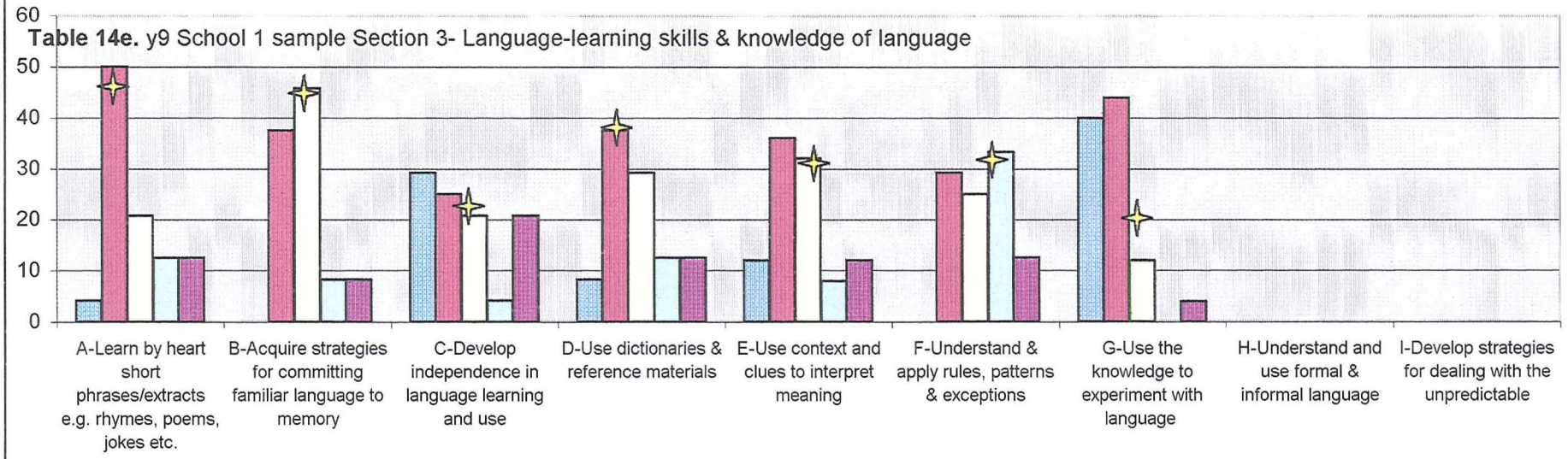
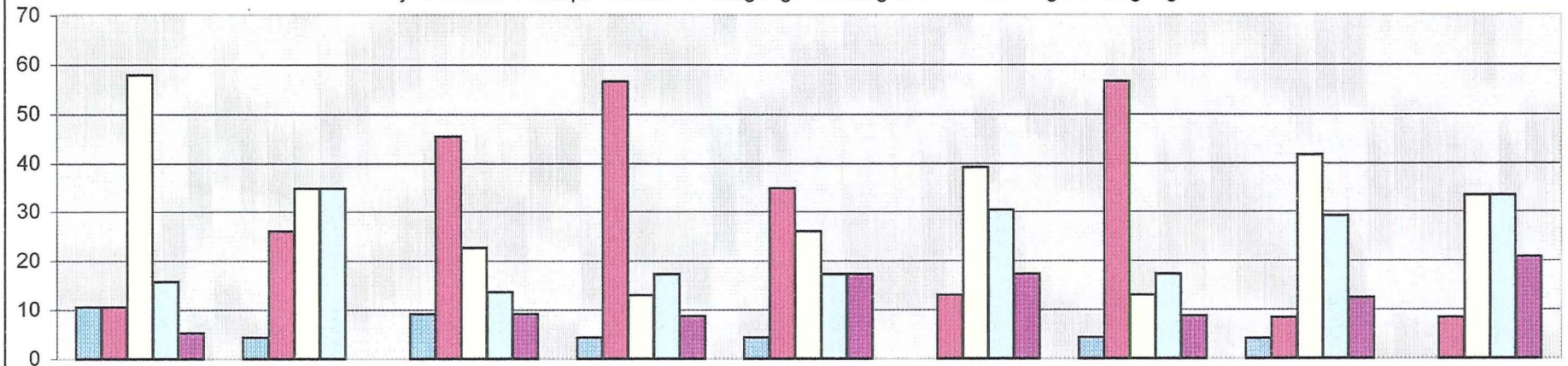


Table 14e. y9 School 1 sample Section 3- Language-learning skills & knowledge of language



y10 School 1 sample Section 3- Language-learning skills & knowledge of language



Clearly, with so much data, a more manageable system was required to analyse the data. Consequently, the following categories were used to track possible trends over the course of the two years. The categories are used to subdivide the data into broad bands of evidence that could indicate trends. Accordingly, the category chosen will often reflect a perspective that is only evident when considering changes within the context of all five possible responses. It follows that it would prove misleading to judge any change solely within one response.

Terms such as "positive" or "un/popularity" are clearly relative terms used for the purpose of identifying a group of responses within the context of the data collection profile. The categories are stepped from negative to positive with a higher score representing a more favourable view in order to remain consistent with scoring procedures used in other questionnaires in the study.

1: Change detected reflecting a more dramatic change from a more to a less positive view of MFL study
2: Change detected indicating a move to a less positive view of MFL study. Degree of change varies.
3: No significant change evident. / Difficult to detect change.
4: Change detected indicating a move to a more positive view of MFL study. Degree of change varies.
5: Change detected reflecting a more dramatic change from a less to a more positive view of MFL study.

SCHOOL 1

1. Communicating in the target language

	SKILL	POSSIBLE CONCLUSIONS OF DATA/COMMENTS	POSS. TREND
a	communicate with each other in pairs and groups, and with their teacher;	Small rise in negative response but strongly favourable positive response from not sure to like. An early indication of the high levels of motivation in this set.	4
b	use language for real purposes, as well as to practise skills;	Surprisingly high positive vote 98-9. Mainly unsure/negative vote 99-00. Few conclusions could be drawn when 48% are uncertain about the skill or don't know. This is most likely due to an unfamiliarity with the skill. Are students are able to understand the researcher's explanation of "real purposes" in a quick response survey such as this?	2
c	develop their understanding and skills through a range of language activities, *e.g. games, role-play, surveys and other investigations;*	98-9 produced a highly positive response to this skill with 54% liking the activities and a total positive response of 70%. Whilst 99-00 saw this figure remain high. There is therefore no significant change recorded here. It is perhaps important to acknowledge that the high degree of student freedom and control inherent in the activities quoted appeal to most students whether y9 or y10. It is significant that this is not the case with lower band groups. Similar results are recorded in other schools. Is this perhaps consistent among 14 yr. olds?	3
d	take part in imaginative and creative activities, *e.g. improvised drama;*	Sharp rise in ambivalence-it is difficult to explain why older students who often incline to GCSE Drama coursework should find this skill less appealing in MFL. Students asked emphasise the restricting role played by the foreign language and this is particularly true of less motivated students.	2
e	use everyday classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech;	The main response remains "not sure" (as in other schools) i.e. unchanged, although the unplanned, spontaneous element obviously appealed to a third of the students. The 9% in y9 that liked this activity a lot is probably part of the c. 25% expressing "like" in y10, suggesting a more measured, less emphatic response to previously enjoyable activities .	3
f	discuss their own ideas, interests and experiences and compare them with those of others;	Largely unchanged. The majority vote 48% remains positive indicating a healthy readiness and curiosity to compare ideas, life-styles, interests with peers. This positive response probably also extends to foreign peers and indicates that this is a potentially rich area to be exploited by MFL teachers. Sadly, a fifth of students remains averse.	3
g	listen, read or view for personal interest and enjoyment, as well as for information;	A dramatically positive response of c. 60% in 98-9 is retained in 99-00 with 60% continuing to enjoy the skill as taught and 25% disliking the skill. Even the freedom of reading without the need to complete accompanying worksheets did not appeal to more and requires investigation in the interview stage. It may suggest that it is the initial reaction to terms such as "reading" that determines the response.	3
h	listen and respond to different types of spoken language;	Positive vote surges to 60%. A possible reason is the pace of listening work, which often appeals at KS4. Given the importance of the skill, this is again an indicator of a motivated set.	4
i	read hand-written and printed texts of different types and of varying lengths and, where appropriate, read aloud;	Y9 study elicited an even response; y10 a largely polarised view with 44% positive. Despite this, nearly 40% of a motivated upper set displays negative reactions towards reading activities as presented. As the skill represents 25% of available marks at GCSE this needs further investigation.	3
j	produce a variety of	Similar polarised reaction as above with a relatively low	3

	types of writing	"not sure" response. Crucially, whilst 40% remain positive (and causes this to be seen as displaying no significant change) 30% of the set hold a negative view of writing. The relatively low "not sure" reaction is significant and perhaps indicates a confidence in defining the skill in question, which represents 25% of marks at GCSE.	
k	use a range of resources for communicating, *e.g. telephone, electronic mail, fax, letters.*	Dramatic change with less than 20% recording a positive reaction. It is essential to note many schools do not possess the facilities to deliver these skills. The high "unsure" response, therefore, must represent evidence of the failure of staff to provide opportunities to practise such skills.	**1**

2. Language skills

a	listen attentively, and listen for gist and detail;	In common with other schools, still very much polarised view with fewer expressing uncertainty. Given the transparency of the skill this is unlikely to be an uncertainty about what the skill entails, rather a genuine ambivalence. More evidence of a significant 55% enjoying vital language learning skills that evoke a negative response among an equally significant 32%?	3
b	follow instructions and directions;	This polarised response may represent a clear message from the pupils of this group. This level of dislike, if replicated elsewhere, raises questions about the use of the TL in MFL lessons.	**3**
c	ask about meanings, seek clarification or repetition;	This skill was never very popular with the group and continues as such. This seems to be seen by students as "using the MFL for real purpose" and disliked. Further investigation may confirm the suspicion that asking for clarification in the target language is viewed by peers as "boffin behaviour", and an invitation to be bullied in some schools.	3
d	ask and answer questions, and give instructions;	Overwhelming positive response indicating a motivated set.	**4**
e	ask for and give information and explanations;	Largely "unsure" response is the dominant factor here.	3
f	imitate pronunciation and intonation patterns;	A less positive view of imitating the MFL sounds may be discerned here-perhaps the same polarisation evident in 2b. Nevertheless, the positive vote must reassure MFL teachers that imitating the sounds of the language remains a popular activity.	**2**
g	initiate and develop conversations;	A polarised view, as in other schools. with c. 45% negative response but 30% positive.	3
h	express agreement, disagreement, personal feeling and opinions;	Unanimity of response suggests that it is the expression of opinions that students hear in this skill and which appeals to them.	5
i	describe and discuss present, past and future events;	Confirmation of what GCSE students know, i.e. that use of tenses indicates a higher register and a quality of language necessary for a higher grade. It is by definition more challenging-hence the unpopularity.	**1**
j	skim and scan texts, including databases where appropriate, for information;	Evidence seems to indicate pupils enjoy scanning for information rather than exploring detail. esp. information on the computer screen e.g. internet pages. Further investigation may confirm the view that this skill is attractive as it removes students from the slower, more methodical approach required in question-answer in reading comprehension work.	**4**
k	copy words, phrases and sentences;	A simple skill that often boosts confidence and explains the positive views at KS3 (the same phenomena was observed by APU, 1985). The like a lot response is reduced at KS4 but helps produce a 60+% "like" response. It is important to register this skill as "listing" (e.g. vocab) rather than writing. Contrast this result with the largely negative result of 1j	3
l	make notes from what they hear or read;	Rise in "unsure" students with some polarisation of view is evident in both years. Former suggest skills is not often taught.	3
m	summarise and report the main points of spoken or written texts;	As above	**3**
n	redraft their writing to improve its accuracy and presentation, *e.g. by word-*	Largely unchanged. Students like making a fair copy of work whether word-processed or not.	3

	processing;		
o	vary language to suit context, audience and purpose;	Difficult concept to explain to teenagers. Responses remain largely "unsure".	**3**

3. Language-learning skills and knowledge of language

a	learn by heart phrases and short extracts, *e.g. rhymes, poems, songs, jokes, tongue twisters;*	The large "unsure" vote may represent an unfamiliarity with this skill, which is perhaps not often used in KS4 lessons. Given the positive response it behoves teachers to use the skill more often than it is at present in these schools.	**1**
b	acquire strategies for committing familiar language to memory;	A largely negative response cannot hide some uncertainty, perhaps, about what this skill entails. Does this indicate an unawareness or recognition that rote-learning, whilst necessary, is not enjoyable. Is there a greater need to introduce study skills earlier?	1
c	develop their independence in language learning use;	A greater independence welcomed by this y10.	**4**
d	use dictionaries and reference materials;	A dramatic surge in the positive response to using reference works, also evident in other schools, and perhaps recognition of the permitted use of the dictionary in current GCSE examinations.	**4**
e	use context and other clues to interpret meaning;	Despite an increase in the negative responses, a healthy 35% retain a positive view of this skill. Is this the "positive third" that inclines to MFL study?	**2**
f	understand and apply patterns, rules exceptions in language forms and structures;	A predictably negative view of grammar and rule learning which worsens into y10.	**2**
g	use their knowledge to experiment with language;	A small change between the years but a surprisingly positive view of experimenting with the language. Does this contradict "using language for real purpose"? What is it about this skill that makes it more enjoyable to both y9 & y10? Could it be the risk factor?	**2**
h	Understand and use formal language	Many students express the view that formal and informal language is an irrelevancy or a mystery-hence the large unsure and negative vote.	**3**
i	Develop strategies for dealing with the unpredictable	Retaining a negative response confirming students' suspicion of any skill requiring spontaneous use of the language.	**3**

Table 14f. *Ques1* data: Tracked changes and possible factors in School 1.

The details of measurable changes suggested in the charts above can now be summarised as follows.

CATEGORY OF TRACKED CHANGE: SCHOOL 1	INCIDENCE OF POSSIBLE CHANGE Y9 -Y10	% INCIDENCE OF POSSIBLE CHANGE
1: Change detected reflecting a more dramatic change from a more to a less positive view of MFL study	4	**13**
2: Change detected in student responses indicating a move to a less positive view of MFL study. Degree of change varies.	6	**19**
3: No significant change evident. / Difficult to detect change.	15	**48**
4: Change detected in student responses indicating a move to a more positive view of MFL study. Degree of change varies.	6	**19**
5: Change detected reflecting a more dramatic change from a less to a more positive view of MFL study	0	**0**

Table 15. *Ques1* data: Summary of discernible change in School 1.

The reader is now referred to the appendices for further detailed accounts of the tracked changes in the two remaining (Schools 2 and 3). It is proposed to include here the summaries only to allow a better perspective of the discernible changes.

5.1.2 Summary of tracked change (all schools)

CATEGORY OF TRACKED CHANGE IN RESPONSE TO PoS: (all schools)	% INCIDENCE OF CHANGE y9>y10 school 1/2/3	MEAN % CHANGE Y9>y10
1: Change detected reflecting a more dramatic change from a more to a less positive view of MFL study	13/16/17	**15%**
2: Change detected in student responses indicating a move to a less positive view of MFL study. Degree of change varies.	19/25/25	**23%**
3: No significant change evident. / Difficult to detect change.	48/42/34	**41%**
4: Change detected in student responses indicating a move to a more positive view of MFL study. Degree of change varies.	19/11/11	**14%**
5: Change detected reflecting a more dramatic change from a less to a more positive view of MFL study	0/0/11	**4%**

Table 16. Summary of tracked change (all schools)

5.1.3 *Ques1*-Teacher perceptions of student responses

MFL staff in the three schools were asked to gauge where the main responses of the students in their classes might be on the continuum presented in the items of *Ques1*. Results were then compared with actual scores and the results tabulated in a graph. The results are included in the *Ques1* graphs. In each graph a star represents the choice of the teacher. Observations on the perceptions of teachers are featured in the second part of this chapter in 5.2.10.

Findings:

5.2.1 Definition of sample (2)

As a result of *Ques2* there is now a series of observations that can reveal more detail about similarities shared by members of the subset. It is therefore now possible to define further and retrospectively the sample and to list the characteristically typical approaches to MFL shared by the group to that offered in section 3.4 (Definition of sample 1). It is likely the members of the sample share many of the following characteristics:

- S/he is likely to have a more positive view rather than a more negative view of school (1-2)
- Is more likely to express an opinion on what is best rather than worst about school (3-4)
- Will mostly note the enjoyment of the social aspects of school life but might also acknowledge the enjoyment in achievement (3-4)
- Has never truanted to avoid MFL (10)
- Feels s/he is trying hard in most subjects and is making good or satisfactory progress (11/13)
- Is likely to have this view endorsed by the teacher (12) but may not know what the teacher thinks (14)
- Acknowledges the difficulty but also the effectiveness of using the target language in the classroom (16-17)
- Is unlikely to have encountered a situation where knowledge of a language was felt to be useful (29)
- S/he is likely to have heard French/German outside school but is unlikely to know a French/German national (32-3)
- Parents may have some knowledge of a MFL but are more likely to have little or no knowledge of the MFL (30)
- The parents are seen as likely to offer support in their child's learning as not (31)
- S/he is unlikely to continue the study of a MFL but will hope to retain some of the language learned (28)
- Has probably visited another European country.

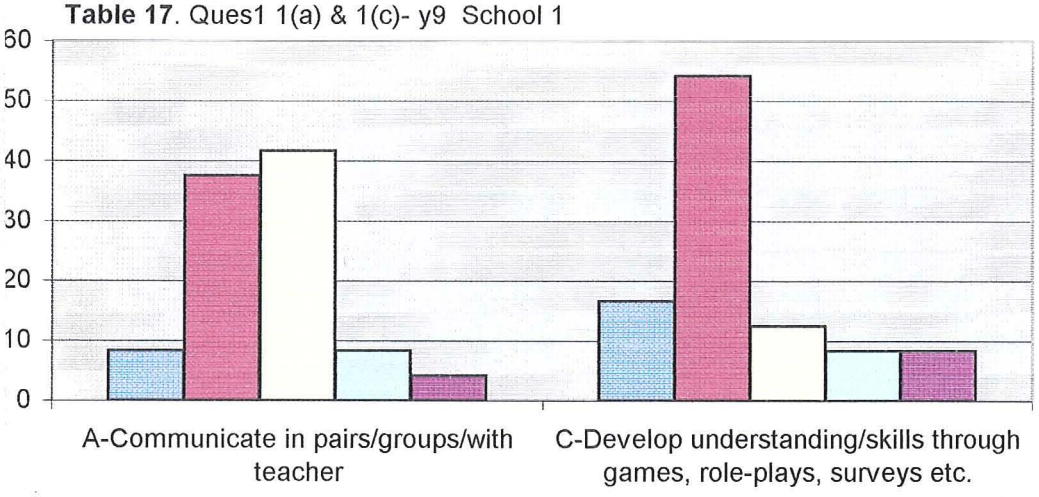
5.2.2 Perceived Enjoyment of MFL (Aim 2)

One of the clearest conclusions of this study is the discernible deterioration in perceived enjoyment of MFL for more successful learners of the subject between the ages of 13 and 15.

The mean scores of *Ques1* were lower in Year 10 than in Year 9 for all schools involved in the study, and this is demonstrated in the summary of tracked changes in section 5.1.2 and in the graphs below. Over a third (38%) of students observed using the survey revealed a decline in levels of perceived enjoyment in the subject when tracked between years 9 & 10. Against this a smaller proportion (c.18%) showed improving levels of enjoyment.

Firstly, let us look at the responses to the active use of the TL by the students in the classroom as illustrated by Table 17 overleaf. This evidence shows a preference for pair-work and groupwork required by role-play exercises and surveys in the TL. The popularity of these activities was sustained across the schools in the sample and between year 9 and 10. Even in the interviews of year 11 students the respondents expressed a preference for acquiring speaking skills using these methods. Further is detailed in later sections. However, other areas of the PoS designed to practise speaking skills did not fare so well.

Table 17. Ques1 1(a) & 1(c)- y9 School 1



1(a) - y10 School 1

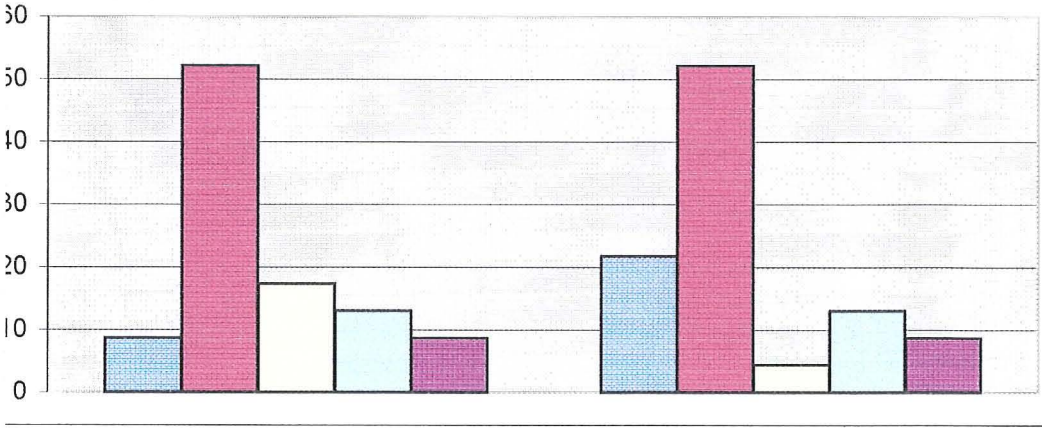
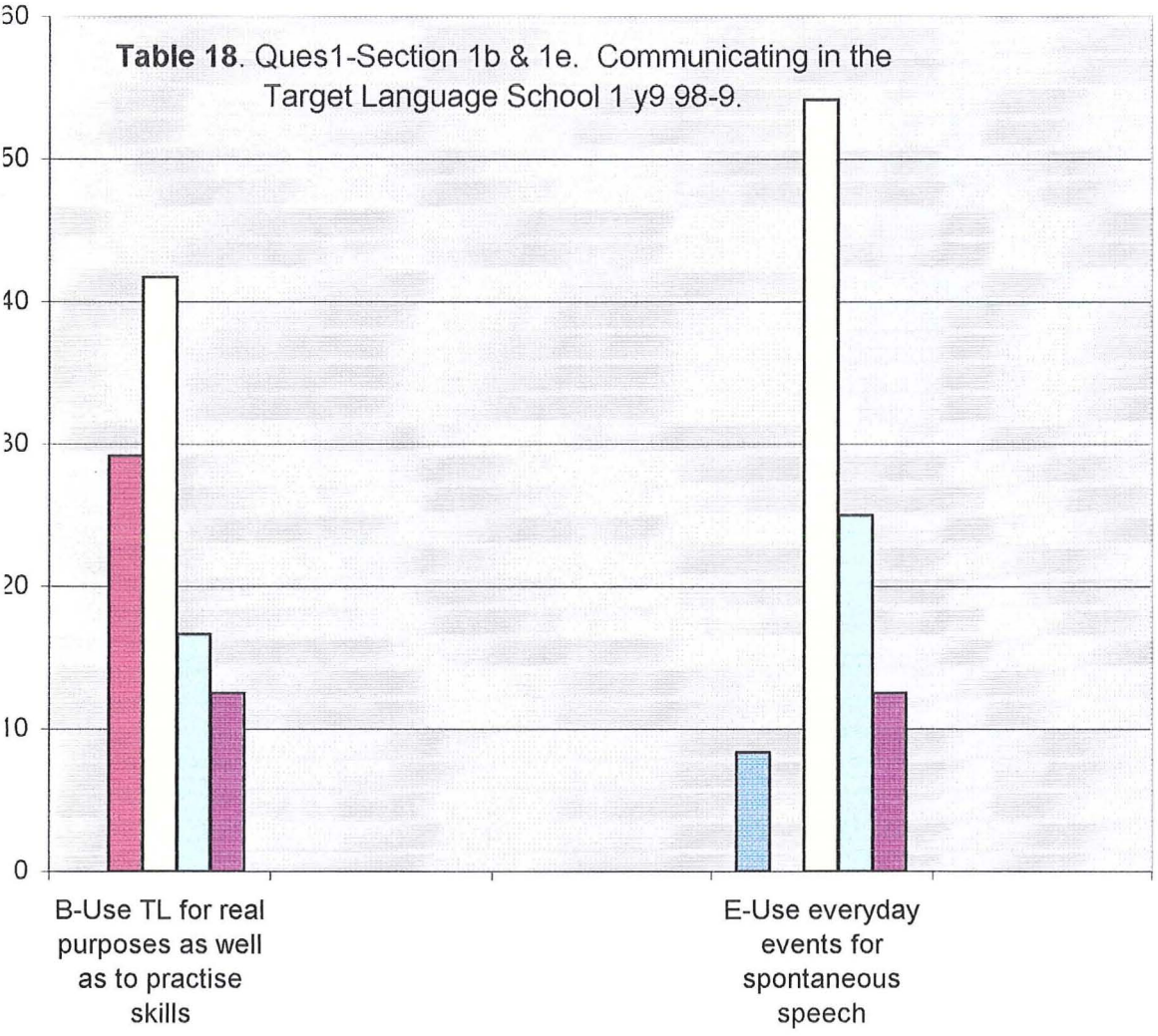
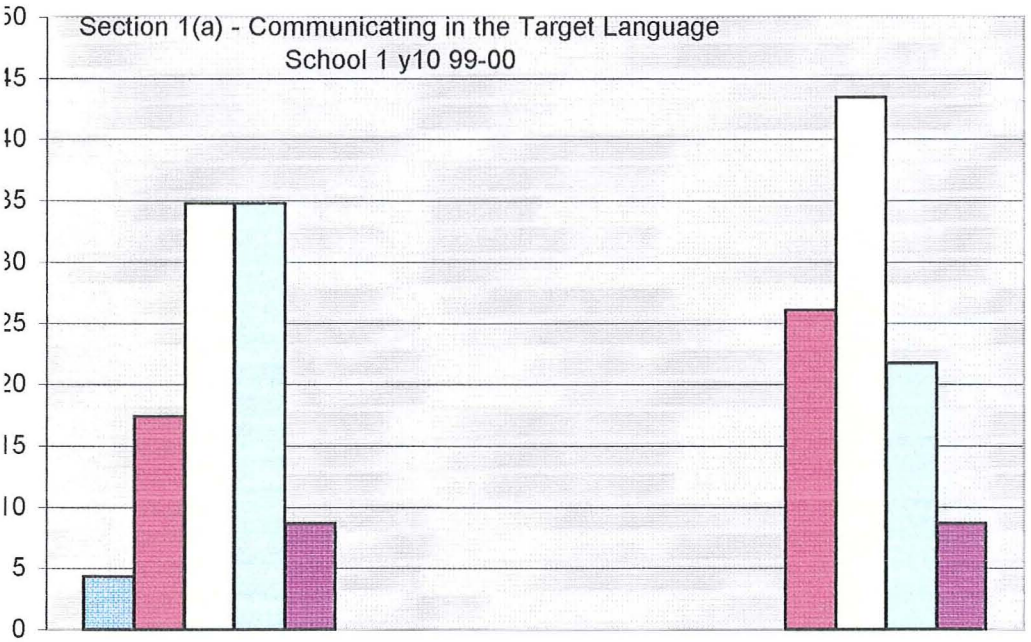


Table 18. Ques1-Section 1b & 1e. Communicating in the Target Language School 1 y9 98-9.





In table 18 below the true extent of the dislike of TL interaction with the teacher is illustrated. According to this evidence-typical of responses in all three schools-these are already in Year 9 unpopular classroom activities that are becoming more unpopular as the study of the subject continues into Year 10.

In the following example (Table 19) it is the responses to the use of the target language ("initiating and developing conversations") that produce evidence for a decline in perceived enjoyment. Here the deterioration between Years 9 and 10 is not as pronounced but the evidence does underline the consistency in the dislike of classroom speaking skills.

It would appear that Year 9 and 10 students might show a positive inclination towards classroom speaking tasks that involve conversations, hence interaction with peers rather than adults (teachers and FLAs). This is discussed further in chapter 6.

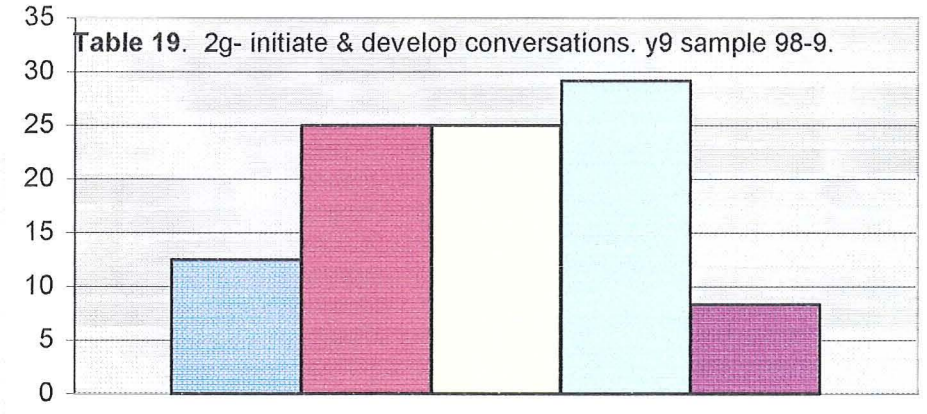
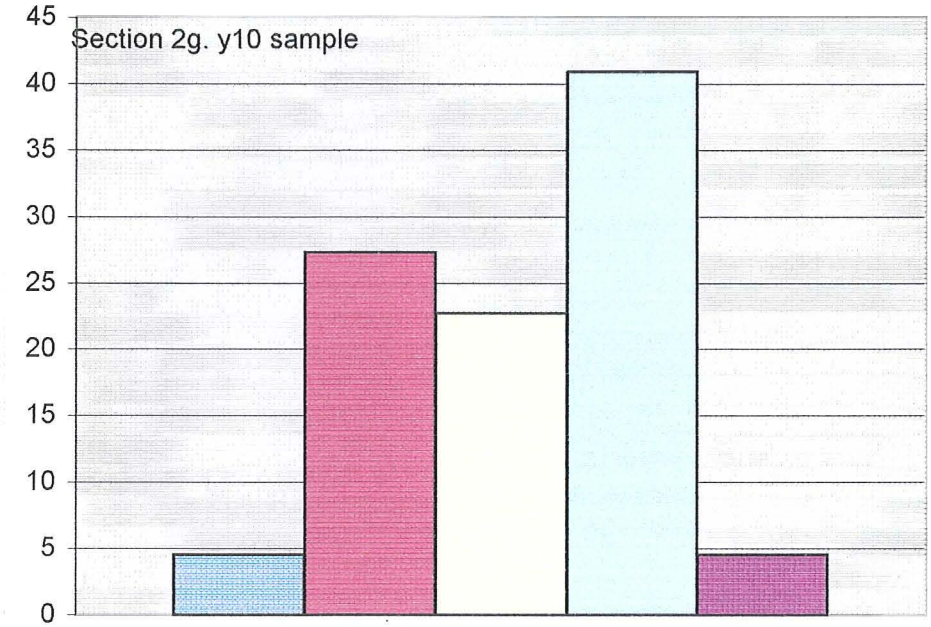


Table 19. 2g- initiate & develop conversations. y9 sample 98-9.

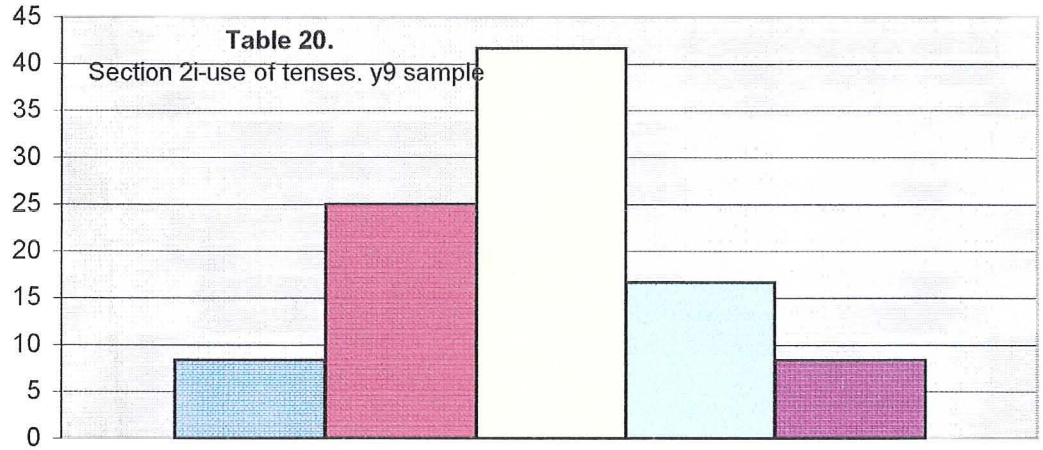


An example from School 2 (Table 20) indicates an increasingly negative response to the use of tenses in producing the language ("describe and discuss present, past and future events"). This finding appears just as the use of tenses becomes an increasingly necessary prerequisite for Level Five at KS3 in Year 9 and for A*-C students at GCSE. Ofsted inspection teams now comment on the percentage of KS3 students achieving Level 5 in MFL and this is an important GCSE predictive benchmark. The importance of A*-C grades at GCSE is self-evident.

A final example from School 2 in Table 21 also shows an unequivocal dislike of all writing exercises.

Table 20.

Section 2i-use of tenses. y9 sample



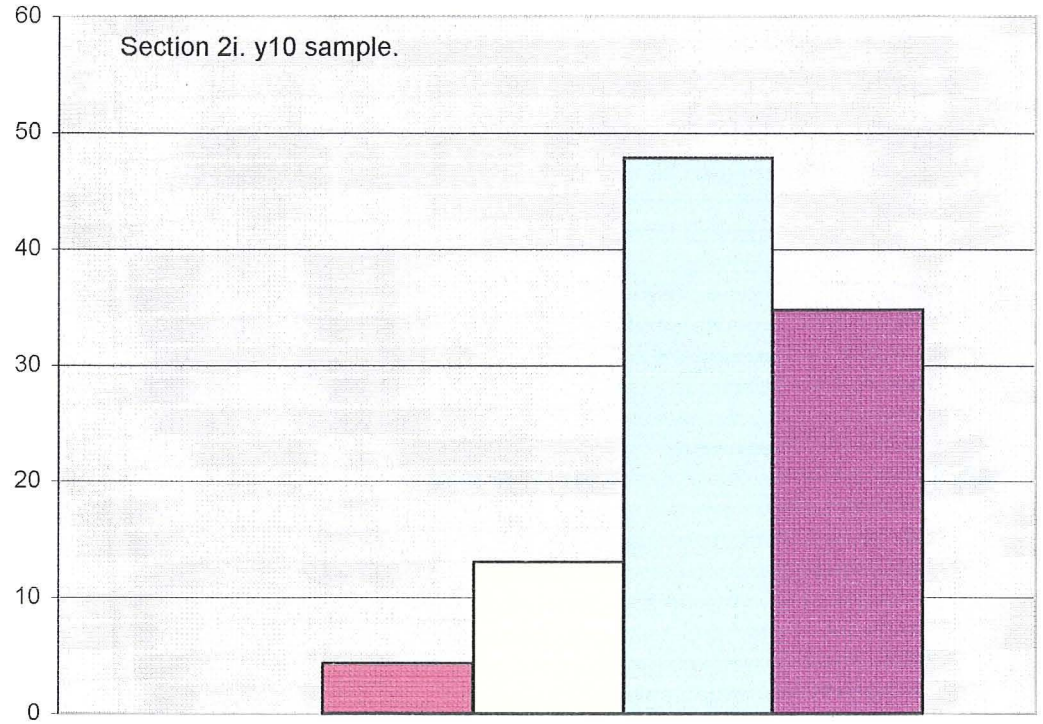
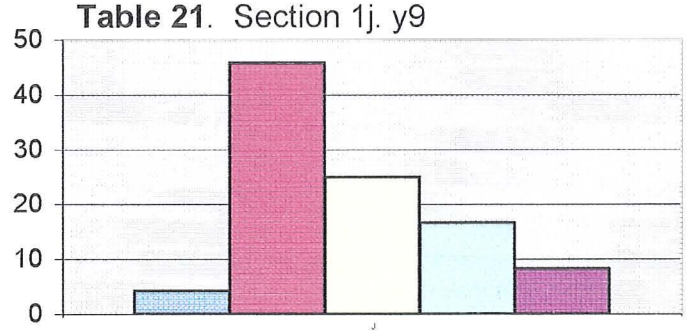
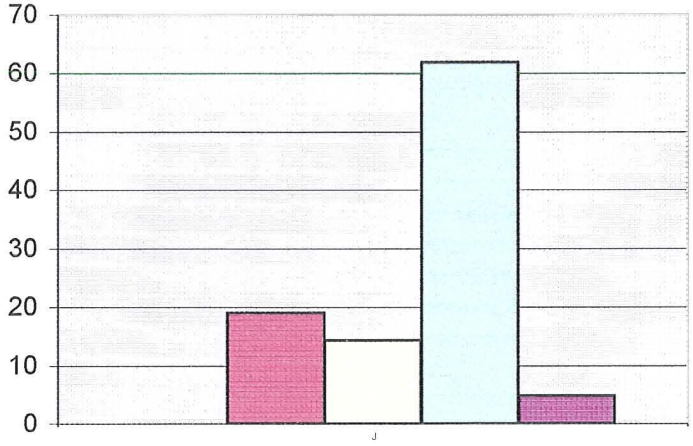


Table 21. Section 1j. y9



Section 1j. y10

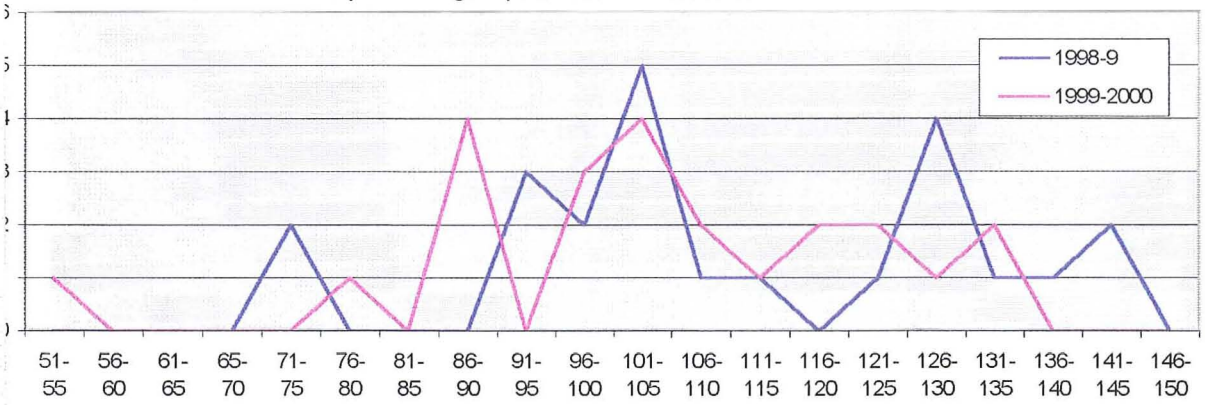


These three examples are replicated in examples taken from other schools in the sample. A complete list of PoS items showing signs of deteriorating interest in *Ques1* feature in the next section.

There is a further method of illustrating the tracked changes evident in the results of *Ques1* from the three schools. Using the scoring system employed throughout this study (and in the original APU surveys of 1983-5) it is possible to weight the Likert scale results of the surveys from 1-5. One point might represent a less positive view of MFL and five a more positive view; with three points assigned to a more neutral or uncertain response. This weighting system is adopted from other language surveys and used whenever possible in all data-gathering in this study.

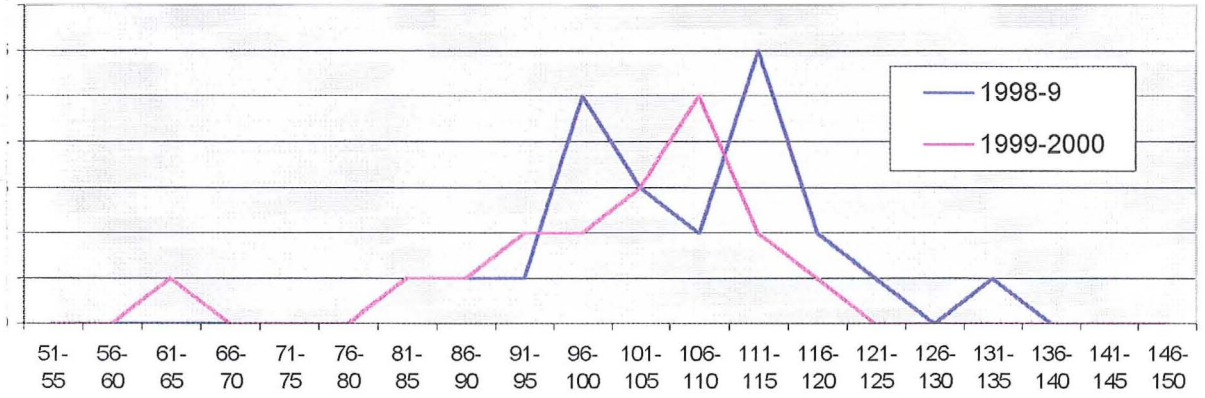
Reproduced below (Tables 22a-c) are graphs showing the frequencies of student responses as grouped scores (together with the mean score for each year) and how they may have changed between 1998-9 (Yr. 9) and 1999-2000 (Yr. 10). A linear graph format rather than the more traditional bar chart has been chosen. This is deemed more appropriate as the intention is to show the trend of, rather than specific measurements within the data.

Table 22a. Ques 1B-Comparative grouped scores School 1.



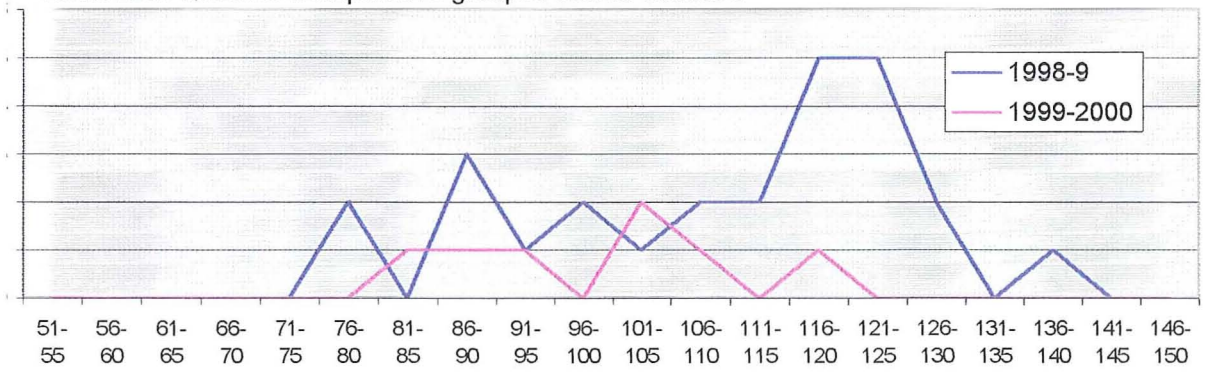
Pupils' scores (grouped) 1998-9 mean= 112.82, 1999-2000 mean=99.65

Table 22b. Ques1B. Comparative grouped scores School 2



Pupils' scores (grouped) mean 1998-9 = 106.65, 1999-2000 MEAN=101.39

Table 22c. Ques1B. Comparative grouped scores School 3



Scores (grouped) mean 1998-9=108.54, 1999-2000=99.86

These graphs appear to represent a clear deterioration in perceived enjoyment in MFL. However, as bad as this may appear, the situation may indeed be worse. For, it must be stated that the deterioration represented above shows a drop from an already low position on any theoretical like-dislike continuum. In the Year 9 measurements the mean scores from *Ques1B* were 112.82 (School 1), 106.65 (School 2) and 108.54 (School 3). If the neutral response for all 35 observations were to return a notional 105 points in the survey (using the weighting system of three points per item of the PoS) then the above scores might be considered distinctly "average" for upper set pupils with more successful learning records in the subject. In Year 10 the measurements returned a mean score of around 100 for all three schools. (99.65, 101.39 & 99.86 respectively) representing a clear worsening trend with close correlation between the measurements of the different schools.

Further evidence of a decline in attitudes appears in *Ques2*, in which less than a quarter (20%) of these able students admitted to learning MFL because they enjoyed it. 32% were unsure and around half of the sample (48%) responded to the question negatively. That the majority would not therefore admit to enjoying MFL was disappointing but not entirely unexpected.

In questions 1-3 of *Ques2* the distribution of percentage responses (reflecting respondents' experiences of secondary school) is positively skewed towards the category "better than expected". Students in the sample -as reported above in section 5.2.1 -are more likely to have a more positive view rather than a more negative view of school and they are more likely to express an opinion on what is best rather than worst about school. By contrast, the experiences of the students in MFL is less positive and more negatively skewed towards the category "worse than expected" (see questions 2b & 8 in *Ques2*). MFL also compares unfavourably with the subsequent measurements of perceptions of enjoyment of other GCSE subjects.

1	Has secondary school been as good/not so good as you expected?						
N= 59	better	1	2	3	4	worse	
		12	20	21	1		54
	%	*22*	*37*	*39*	*2*		
2a	**Have the subjects been as good/not so good as you expected?**						
	better	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	worse	
		4	29	19	4		56
	%	*7*	*52*	*34*	7		
2b	**And MFL? Has MFL been as good/not so good as you expected?**						
	better	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	worse	
		4	17	19	17		57
	%	*7*	*30*	*33*	*30*		

Table 23. *Ques2* Results-student reactions to school and MFL experience.

There is still the possibility that such negative responses may also be evident in students' reactions to other subjects. In question 8 therefore students were asked to use the 1-4 scoring system to position MFL beside other subjects according to whether MFL was most or least preferred. The majority placed MFL in categories 3 and 4 ("less and least preferred").

8	MFL as most (1) - least preferred (4) school subject						
	most	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*least*	
		1	9	27	20		57
	%	*2*	*16*	*47*	*35*		

Table 24. *Ques2* Results-popularity of MFL measured against other subjects.

The Year 11 interviews confirmed these findings with similar mean rankings for MFL (enjoyment) in all three schools. In terms of ranked perceived popularity between all subjects in year 11 (both GCSE and non-examined) MFL registers a humble 6th (School 1 & School 2) and 5th (School 3) place out of 8 (mean rankings were 6.1, 6.6 & 5.1 respectively). The majority of interviewees also acknowledged that their attitudes towards MFL had worsened since Year 9 and in two schools this view was held by a clear majority.

All the evidence of *Ques3* revealed lower total category scores for "enjoyment" than the two other key observed variables of perceived difficulty and usefulness (desire for contact with the foreign community returned, however, the consistently lowest scoring measurements). The highest percentage for "enjoyment" recorded peaked at a score ten

points below that of the equivalent APU score of 1985. The mean total score for the subset was 20.9 points compared to the APU 24.6 out of a total possible score of 40. Further discussion of these conclusions is in the next chapter.

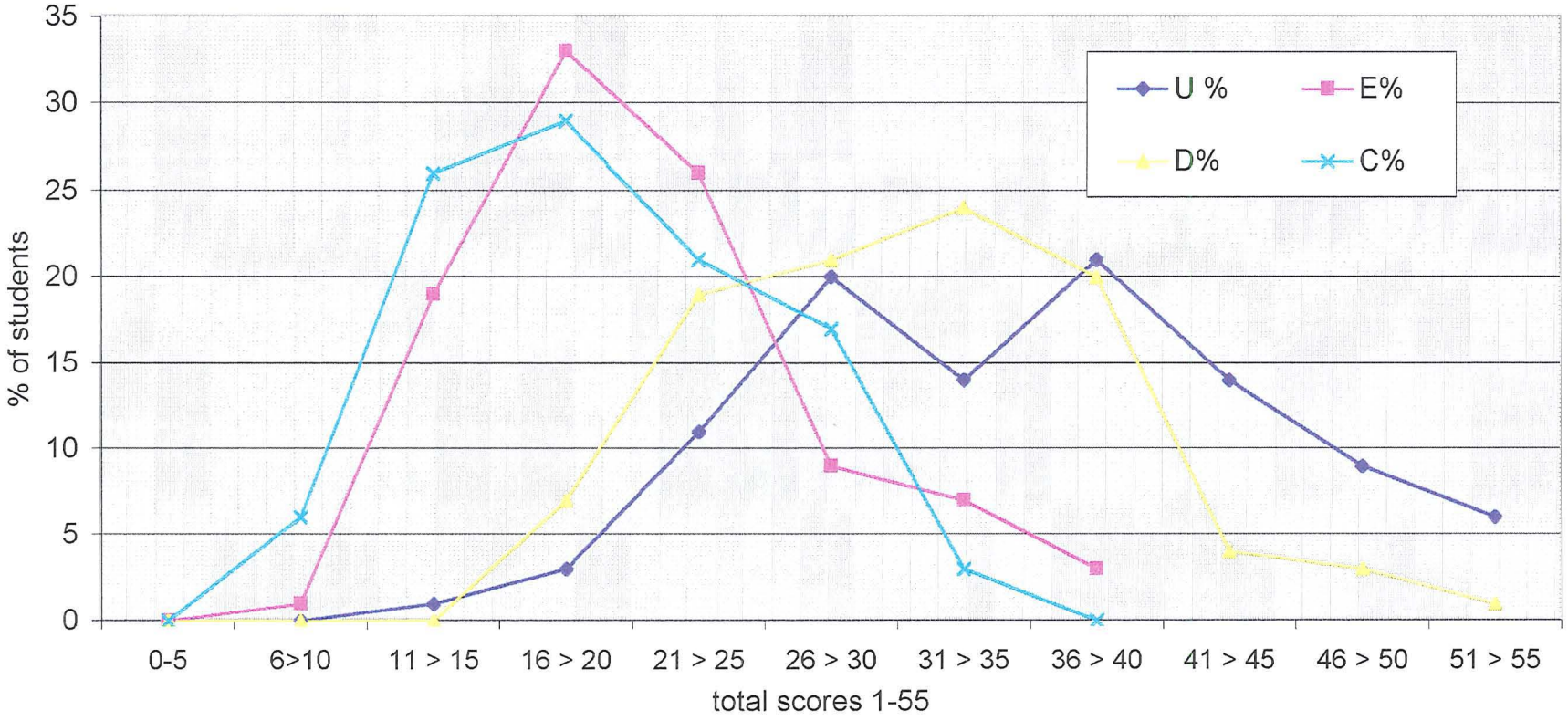


Table 25. *Ques 3* - Distribution of % scores of observed variables (usefulness-U, enjoyment-E, difficulty-D, contact-C).

When the grouped scores of the 1985 APU (Table 26) for this category are compared with those of this study a similar picture emerges. At this point it may be relevant to recall that the same questionnaire and weighting systems were used in both studies but that the caveats of section 4.6 must also apply here.

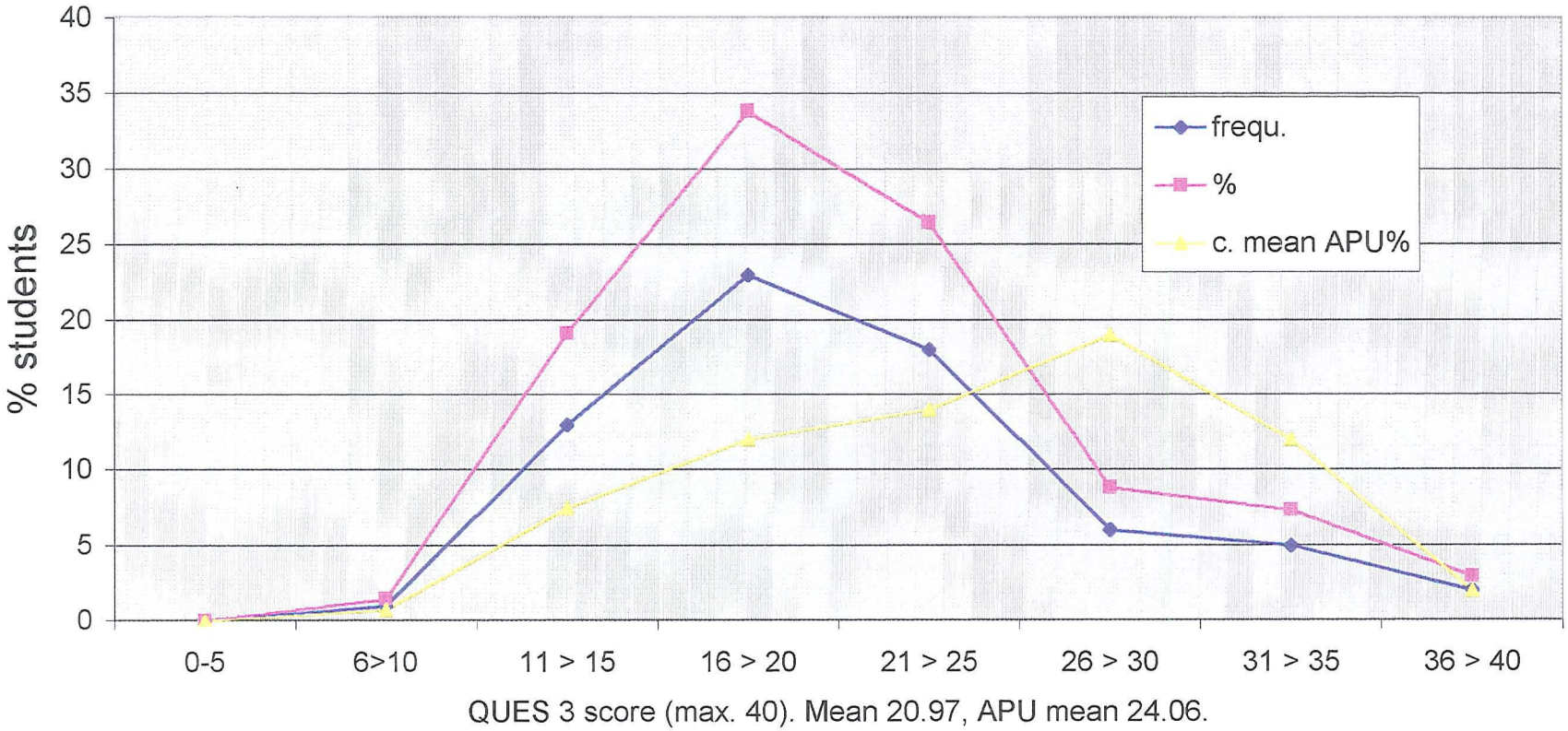


Table 26. *Ques3*. Perceived Enjoyment-Distribution of scores with 1985 APU equivalent.

It seems likely therefore that, given these results, only a small proportion of the field would admit enjoying the subject. In fact only two students in 39 interviewed admitted to liking MFL enough to take the subject to A/S - Level. A further four were "unsure". The majority (between 50-78%) would "probably not" or "absolutely not" study MFL post 16. The "10%" of students (across the full ability range) that Chambers (1993) found who were positively disposed towards MFL study post 16 does not compare well with local findings. More research is required in this field to determine reasons whether this picture is replicated in other local schools and why this may be so.

5.2.3. Summary of more positive responses (skills/activities from the PoS that most clearly elicited more positive responses in *Ques1*)

Before I begin to look at the other observed variables of *Ques3* we must firstly return to the second and third aims of this investigation. Perceived enjoyment (or lack of it) is a central consideration of this work and it is easy, in the light of the above evidence, to assume an exclusively negative view of all aspects of MFL study in local schools. Yet, whilst negative conclusions are inescapable the picture is more complex. And so it is now important to retain an idea of precisely what the sample suggested might be "enjoyable" and equally to list the skills and activities that proved less popular. If possible the findings should also offer reasons as supported by evidence from the first section of the directed interviews. Once again, the weighting system used in the interviews ranges from 1 (less positive) to 4 (more positive). But first let us turn to *Ques1* and activities where a positive response suggested enjoyment of an activity.

In order to make the categorisation of positive and negative responses clearer the researcher chose to group together those skills from the PoS that *most clearly* elicited more positive or negative responses from the sample in *most* schools according to the evidence in *Ques1*.

If the majority response in one school did not conclusively match those of the others then the skill was still included in the list but further evidence then sought in the interviews why this may be so. These items are marked * below together with the name of the school where additional information was required. This enabled the researcher to pursue, for example, possible reasons why a dislike of ICT work or a greater enjoyment of written work might be more apparent in one school than the others.

Those items from the PoS not included in the following commentary cannot be assumed to have elicited neutral responses-although this was sometimes the case. In the majority of instances evidence concerning these skills was contradictory or simply unclear.

To begin with, here is a list of the skills that elicited varying degrees of positive response:

Section 1	
a	communicate with each other in pairs and groups, and with their teacher (*School 2);
c	develop their understanding and skills through a range of language activities, *e.g. games, role-play, surveys and other investigations;*
f	discuss their own ideas, interests and experiences and compare them with those of others;
g	listen, read or view for personal interest and enjoyment, as well as for information (*School 2);
h	listen and respond to different types of spoken language (*School 2);
k	use a range of resources for communicating, *e.g. telephone, electronic mail, fax, letters.* (*School 3).
Section 2	
h	express agreement, disagreement, personal feeling and opinions (*School 2);
j	skim and scan texts, including databases where appropriate, for information;
k	copy words, phrases and sentences (*School 3);
n	redraft their writing to improve its accuracy and presentation, *e.g. by word-processing;*
Section 3	
a	learn by heart phrases and short extracts, *e.g. rhymes, poems, songs, jokes, tongue twisters* (*School 1;
d	use dictionaries and reference materials (*School 3);
e	use context and other clues to interpret meaning (*School 1);
g	use their knowledge to experiment with language;

Table 27. *Ques1*-summary positive responses.

5.2.4 Commentary on positive responses

(skills/activities from the PoS that most clearly elicited more responses in Questionnaire1 with findings from Interviews).

As proposed in the previous section it is now appropriate to comment on the above list.

Section 1:

A communicate with each other in pairs and groups, and with their teacher;

See 1C below.

C develop their understanding and skills through a range of language activities, e.g. games, role-play, surveys and other investigations;

Students expressed what appears to be a disproportionate liking for pairwork, mainly role-play work conducted with a friend or learning partner. The popularity was further underlined by the high percentages of students who enjoyed acting out role-plays and interviewing each other in survey and investigation work.

In interviews MFL staff proposed the idea that such enjoyment may derive not only from the boost to confidence supported by such tasks but also from a freedom to wander off-task i.e. the ability to control when and to what degree work is attempted.
The evidence presented here confirms that students prefer partnership-controlled activities such as pairwork to practise the MFL and that the enjoyment and sense of achievement continues for most into Year 11. There is no evidence to confirm the suspicions of teachers. Rather there is evidence from the interviews to uphold the view that students mutually support each others' learning principally in role-play work and that this may include slowing the pace when grappling with new structures and lexis. This is perceived by most learners as helpful and on task (and possibly by staff as inefficient or even off task). There is therefore a greater freedom for students better to control the pace and level of the work, but this may not necessarily be a negative finding. In this respect this observation is echoed in the responses to section 3c, which encourages independence in language learning.

Evidence from the taped and structured interviews in Years 9 and11 supported these findings. When asked to rate the popularity of the activity using the 1-4 Likert scale with weighting the overwhelming majority chose 3 and 4 (mean=3.03). Reasons given for the popularity included the sense of achievement acquired without the teacher's direct involvement, learning from each other, collaborative work with a friend, the more interactive and practical or "real" nature of the work. Typical comments were "I like working with my friends without the teacher", "it's more practical than writing", "it's more realistic" and "when you're (talking) face to face you can pretend you're abroad". Typical negative responses were "I don't like speaking work", "I get nervous" and " I don't like being listened to".

It is therefore likely that the popularity of this work may find its origins in an array of factors which changes from person to person but centres mainly on interest, control, achievement and the supporting and building of learner confidence.

F Discuss their own ideas, interests and experiences and compare them with those of others;

2H Express agreement, disagreement, personal feeling and opinions;

Students rated these highly for many of the reasons given above (mean=3.20 in interviews). In interview many added that they were stimulated by the content of the work and registering the disappointment felt when classmates did not respond as fully as they might. The comment "I like finding out about what other people do-I'm nosy!" explains many of the responses to this category. Several interviewees liked talking about themselves and peers but needed the language rehearsed in advance. Some were concerned at the more open-ended nature inherent in the descriptor and felt this was a threat to confidence. On the other hand some students liked the work because the greater variety of responses afforded extended learning opportunities and "made it more interesting".

G Listen, read or view for personal interest and enjoyment, as well as for information;

Students responded to the phrase "for personal interest and enjoyment" and interpreted this in terms of a freedom to determine the response to passages in the foreign language. Evidence suggests an interest in authentic reading and viewing materials (magazines, TV adverts, web-pages) provided the work does not require recording the response. Perusing web pages would be an extension of this although this raised questions of access to ICT. This view was endorsed in the interviews with a typical rating of 3 (mean=3.20). Many felt it did not constitute pressure as reading comprehension work might normally do. "You can work at your own pace" summed up the feelings of many. Indeed, the freedom to peruse the material without always looking up unfamiliar words might be said to bring the activity closer to the act of perusing glossy English magazines. Others noted it enabled students to follow their interests more easily and this led to more successful learning as it was not perceived to be work. See *Ques1* 1G in all schools. A small number noted the difficulty of trying unsuccessfully to understand everything.

H Listen and respond to different types of spoken language;

Evidence from *Ques1* and the early interviews generally confirmed the popularity of listening tasks. Some commented on the challenge represented in listening passages as the task entailed trying to understand a foreign national(s) and this added a degree of authenticity. These students felt it was rewarding to "pick up things you don't understand and work it out". However, in the Year 11 interviews some difficulties were acknowledged with the more advanced (Higher Level) listening tasks. Some felt these were "too fast" and they "couldn't keep up" and this could be frustrating. A minority thought listening was harder than reading as it was more difficult to surmise meaning without a text. The relatively low mean ranking of 2.5 confirms that more positive earlier views had begun to change. To a certain extent, this more qualified response weeks before the GCSE exam is inevitable given the variety of ability present in the sets and their targeted grades of A-D. There was no evidence to support the findings of Chambers (1993) who found listening tasks to be generally the least popular aspect of language learning.

K use a range of resources for communicating, e.g. telephone, electronic mail, fax, letters

All the data say students relish or would relish the opportunity to use new technology in MFL learning (See *Ques1* 1K in all schools). However, many students expressed a conditional or projected liking for the work, as they do not regularly use email, telephones etc. in MFL lessons. Indeed, the high "Not sure" response was later linked in the Year 11 interviews to the comparative rarity of the work. Many students undeniably registered "Not done" by choosing "Not sure" in *Ques1*. The interview mean rating was 3.2. Some (but by no means all) students used home PCs for communication and in interview listed the computer's control, speed, neatness and novelty value in praising ICT work. Most had used the internet to research coursework and many liked the interactive nature of well-designed ICT lessons. All respondents mentioned the authentic, up-to-date feel of internet work.

Section 2:

H Express agreement, disagreement, personal feeling and opinions;
See Section 1f

J skim and scan texts, including databases where appropriate, for information;

Particularly appealing here was the pace of the work and students were attracted by the control exercised by the learner. ("You can go at your own pace".) Magazine articles and web-pages on French/German celebrities (e.g. David Ginola) proved particularly interesting. Not having to translate everything on the page was equally attractive to students, who often noted the satisfaction experienced when the gist of an unknown passage is satisfactorily worked out. A mean of 3.03 in the interviews confirmed the popularity of the skill.

K copy words, phrases and sentences;
N redraft their writing to improve its accuracy and presentation, e.g. by word-processing;

In this study around half the respondents (of *Ques1*) professed a liking for these skills; others were not so inspired. Students are, according to APU findings, generally more ambivalent about writing than other skills and this appears to be confirmed here. Regrettably, the most popular tasks tend to be the most simplistic and mechanical e.g. copying vocabulary from the board and this is echoed in the 51% positive response from the APU findings, which found that pupils tended to like the easiest tasks. However, the popularity of section 2(k) of the PoS should not indicate a reluctance to engage in more challenging writing tasks. Most Year 11 interviewees that professed a liking for this skill mentioned the desire to have neat and accurate records of completed work. Making work neat equated for many successful learners with doing work well in the subject and neat record keeping reinforced a feeling of accomplishment. It seems reasonable to assume that this widely held opinion among the interviewees (rating =3.64 mean) could explain the popularity of 2(k) and 2(n) in *Ques1* in all schools. A readiness to respond to more challenging writing tasks is more likely recorded in section 1(j). See below.

Section 3

A Learn by heart phrases and short extracts, e.g. rhymes, poems, songs, jokes, tongue twisters;

Some Year 9 students sometimes express a liking for teaching methods more commonly associated with younger MFL learning. Choral repetition, learning rhymes or songs collectively, for example, was deemed preferable as it was not, according to taped interviews in Year 9 thought to highlight individual oral performance.

However this response is less clear in Year 10 and was not endorsed in the Year 11 interviews. Most students here rated the activity at 2 (mean = 2.4) and many reported that they would feel belittled to learn a song in KS4. Some pupils made an exception for a song "If it was interesting/amusing". Most did not define what this meant with any accuracy (other than somewhat elliptical references to entertainment) but it would seem to embrace songs other than pop-music. Other more motivated students reported the interest and learning opportunities offered by different vocabulary of songs, poems etc. and this suggested using more challenging texts (e.g. pop songs and graffiti) with the more able. More students reflected how much they would have enjoyed this activity in KS3. It might therefore be concluded that by 15 most students in this ability range (besides the few able and highly motivated students) have outgrown a preference for songs, poems, jokes etc that they may have expressed in year 10.

D use dictionaries and reference materials;

The nature of the field perhaps explains this liking for reference materials. Interview data revealed an impressive liking for "being right" and the need to avoid "being wrong" among these more able learners (mean rating =3.2). Dictionaries were seen as a means of accessing incontestably accurate information rather than representing burdensome appendages to language-learning, even when using a dictionary proved less than straightforward. ("It helps you get a handle on meaning".). Most confessed a liking for the feeling of being right and this was recognised as confidence-boosting. Some also acknowledged the dictionary as a provider of "better words" suggesting a recognition of a need to seek higher language registers and sound learning techniques. "It helps you remember if you spend time looking for a word".

E use context and other clues to interpret meaning;
G use their knowledge to experiment with language;

E Most students enjoyed this in varying degrees confirmed in the Year 11 interviews (mean rating 3.0). Many were attracted by the speed of resolution to a linguistic problem offered by "guessing" the meaning of difficult combinations of words; others liked the puzzle element in using clues to predict meanings. Several students recognised the inevitability of risk taking adding such comments as, "You have to take a risk sometimes. You can't look up everything in an exam."

G This skill proved popular according to both *Ques1* and the interviews in which a mean rating of 3.0 was reached. However, recorded verbatim responses in the interviews seem to indicate that the skill is associated by many with risk-taking. "Experimenting" could well have acquired additional nuances for contemporary teenagers. Inevitably, in describing the skill, staff sometimes chose to strike a contrast between a more cautious approach to using language in which accuracy (and therefore caution) was of paramount importance and a more cavalier approach in which the attempt at communication (even if this entailed making mistakes) was more important. Phrases such as "having a go" and "taking risks" may be appealing to the adolescent mind and may not give a true picture of the extent to which students are prepared to be adventurous in a linguistic way in the classroom. Certainly, many interviewees expressed a dislike for "getting things wrong" in guessing, preferring to "stick to basics" and follow firmer teacher or textbook direction. Some expressed a preference for guesswork in classwork but a concern about guessing with coursework and this echoes findings from 3(d) above. Further work is needed to assess in more detail the popularity of this skill.

5.2.5 Summary of negative responses

(skills/activities from the PoS that most clearly elicited more negative responses in *Questionnaire1*)

Section 1	
b	Use language for real purposes, as well as to practise skills;
e	Use everyday classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech;
j	produce a variety of types of writing (*School 1);
Section 2	
c	Ask about meanings, seek clarification or repetition;
g	initiate and develop conversations (*School 3);
i	describe and discuss present, past and future events;
m	summarise and report the main points of spoken or written texts (*School 1);
Section 3	
f	understand and apply patterns, rules exceptions in language forms and structures;
h	Understand and use formal and informal language;
i	Develop strategies for dealing with the unpredictable (see 1b)

Table 28. *Ques1*-Summary of negative responses

5.2.6 Commentary on negative responses

(skills/activities from the PoS that most clearly elicited more negative responses in *Questionnaire1* with findings from Interviews).
As with section 5.2.4 the following commentary takes supporting evidence from *Ques1* and the initial questions of the interviews.

Section 1

B Use language for real purposes, as well as to practise skills;
I develop strategies for dealing with the unpredictable (Section 3);
E Use everyday classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech;

Most students consistently perceived these tasks as challenging and unenjoyable. With 1(b) the students interviewed suggested that the latter part of the descriptor had been ignored and students concentrated on "using language for real purpose". The mean rating of those interviewed was 1.9 with a high degree of parity between schools, confirming the findings of *Ques1*.

Many viewed the skills as potentially confidence threatening. "I don't like getting it wrong" was a view expressed by many, or, a simple reluctance to take part ("I wouldn't do it", "I'd probably get it wrong."). Others commented on a dislike of the unexpected and a distrust of spontaneity, preferring to be able to plan for the unexpected. Some saw the exercise of using language for real purpose as more fitting when abroad than when in the classroom in front of peers. Embarrassment is clearly a factor in what is deemed a high-risk activity with significant potential for loss of face and consequent ridicule by peers.

In many ways, responses to this skill were similar to those of Section 2g ("initiate and develop conversations."). Only the most confident learners were prepared to respond favourably to this skill and many were repelled by the seemingly infinite breadth of the tasks which in one moment might require students to juxtapose, without preparation, structures from Year 8 alongside more advanced work. It is often the unexpected element of the skill which students find so challenging. Given this evidence it is not surprising to find that speaking registers the least number of points per candidate in any post GCSE component score analysis in at least two schools in the sample.

J produce a variety of types of writing;
M (Section 2) summarise and report the main points of spoken or written texts;

The student response to the question of writing in MFL is complex. Certainly there is an abundance of evidence from *Ques1* and the *Actres* 1995-6 suggesting the relative unpopularity of the skill. Questionnaires (*Ques1*) given to mixed ability sets outside the sample confirm that students of more average and below average ability do not generally enjoy writing tasks. More able year 10 pupils from the *Actres* 1995-6 cross-sectional study rarely included writing tasks among the audit of the students' preferred activities in MFL. Only a fraction of the 49 students in the survey included common writing exercises (such as completing a worksheet or sentences based on a passage) among their chosen 15 of 37 preferred tasks. More students included copying from the board in their choice of preferences than such everyday exercises and writing a short diary entry or correcting work on the computer. A greater preference was expressed for MFL project work such as making a brochure in the MFL.

Possibly, it is true that simplistic writing tasks such as copying from the board or the filling in of cloze texts with single items are preferred by most Year 10 students to ostensibly more interesting but essentially challenging tasks.
It is suggested here that simplistic writing tasks that APU found so popular among Year 9 students can often boost the confidence of less confident MFL learners. Ability does not always reflect high levels of confidence and so there are students in this more able subset that preferred the more simplistic writing exercises. Students often perceive Attainment Target Four as the most difficult in schools with lower levels of literacy than the national norm. They recognise it is virtually impossible to achieve higher levels of accuracy in written compared to listening and reading assignments. Every element of detail of students' work is immediately apparent in black and white to the reader/marker, as are the teacher's corrections and this was further reported to be dispiriting. Teachers noted it was often possible to praise students more often in oral rather than written work. Of the students interviewed early in the study around a quarter stated that they found writing difficult or boring or both.

By Year 11 the picture is changing. The spring term of the final year sees many of the more able students maturing considerably in their attitudes towards language learning. Many recognise the instrumental gains to be made by choosing more challenging writing tasks and how this can raise interest levels and expected grades. All three schools in the sample opt for coursework in writing. The completion of the most coursework assignments has, by now, determined the writing exam prospects of most candidates. With more able candidates the evidence of staff assessed (but un-moderated) written coursework confirms the possibility of a higher GCSE grade and can further motivate the learner. This is a phenomena acknowledged by the staff of all three sample schools. GCSE SEG Modular results also added to this positive effect in one school.

These factors were also recognised in the Year 11 interviews (popularity of extended writing mean = 3.2). Intermediate and Higher GCSE writing tasks such as letter-writing, accounts and longer narratives are now more accessible and popular than previously.

Writing therefore is not necessarily unpopular per se in KS4. It seems to depend on the tasks offered, the level of learner confidence and the timing of the question. Although unconfirmed, it may be that the perception of writing as an enjoyable or useful skill

among more able students increases with successful coursework and the proximity of the GCSE exam.

Section 2

C Ask about meanings, seek clarification or repetition;
(See section 1b).
G initiate and develop conversations;
(See section 1b).

I describe and discuss present, past and future events;
Section 3F understand and apply patterns, rules exceptions in language forms and structures;

This reluctance to embrace the need for grammar as reported in the Year 10 *Ques1* was also not confirmed in the Year 11 interviews. Where comments were made they seemed to associate such aversion to grammar with earlier GCSE work and earlier MFL learning experiences. Comments varied from "boring", "difficult" and "confusing" to "OK", "helps you achieve" and "I quite like using verbs". There was no clear aversion to the use of grammar and the latter student comments may indicate the degree to which the impending GCSE examinations impacts on student thinking. It may be that the skill was seen in year 11 as a pathway to higher registers and marks. If this is the case it suggests the presence of instrumental motivation also evident in the responses to the use of dictionaries (3d).

M summarise and report the main points of spoken or written texts (see Section 1j);

Section 3:

H Understand and use formal and informal language;

There is widespread confusion in all three schools about the conventions that underpin the use of formal and informal language.

I Develop strategies for dealing with the unpredictable (see 1b)

5.2.7 Perceived Usefulness of MFL

It is now appropriate to examine the student responses of *Ques3* to other observed variables. The evidence presented on "usefulness" overleaf in Table 29 suggests a more positive view among successful learners of the usefulness of MFL compared to the other variables. The mean total points score was higher proportionately than that of "enjoyment", "difficulty" and "contact with the foreign community", and with a mean of 35.03 closer to the 35.56 of APU and any theoretical standard that APU in 1985 may be said to represent. As might be expected of the able field, a greater percentage of local students scored in the highest category than was the case nationally of students in 1985. It seems students in this research acknowledge the usefulness of a language.

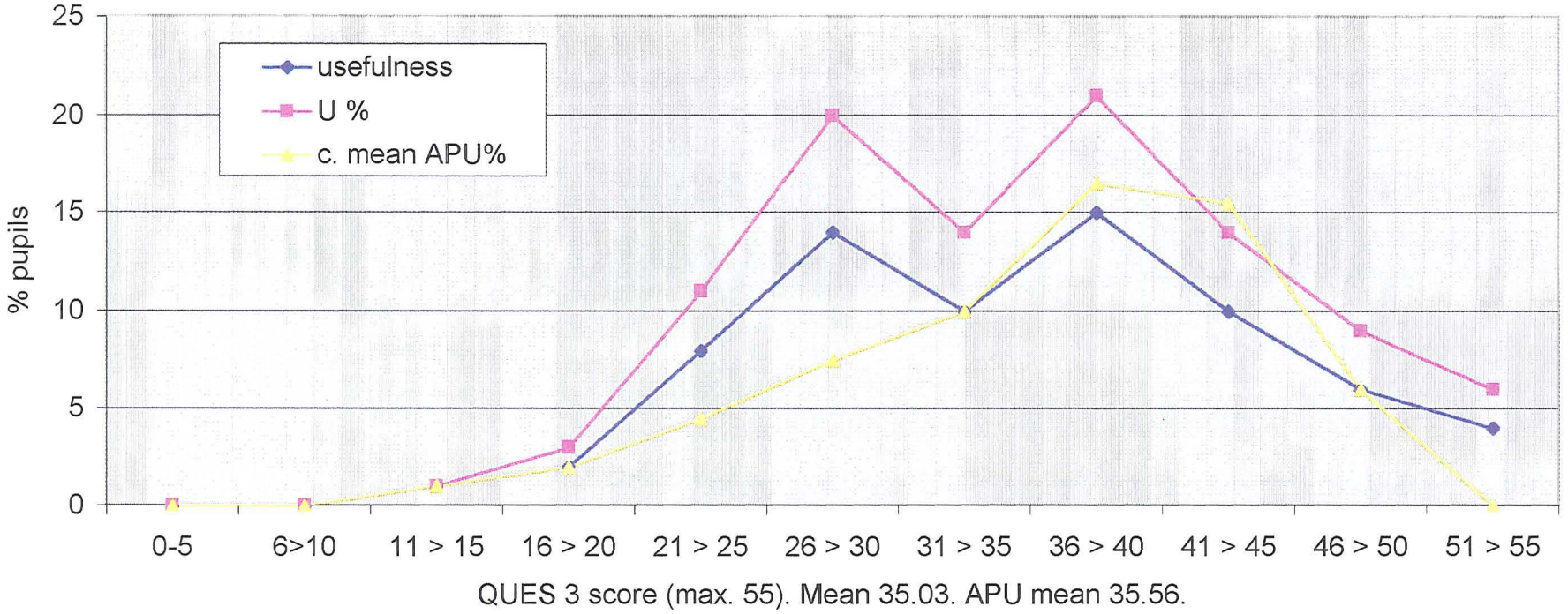


Table 29. *Ques3* Perceived Usefulness of MFL-Distribution of scores (with equivalent 1985 APU scores)

It seems logical that levels of perceived *usefulness* among students would feature in any judgements made by pupils on the *importance* of languages. To this end Question 7 of *Ques2* required students to rank MFL with 8 other GCSE subjects in order of "importance". No guidance was given that might illustrate what was meant by importance. The mode ranking in the range of 1-9 was in position 5 (28% of responses) with a mean rank of 6.6.

7	**MFL ranking in perceived importance**		
	Rank	**Frequency**	*%*
	1	0	*0*
	2	1	*2*
	3	3	*5*
	4	11	*18*
	5	17	*28*
	6	11	*18*
	7	9	*15*
	8	5	*8*
	9	3	*5*
		60	

Table 30. *Ques2* Results-perceived importance of MFL

Whilst these results are not impressive it is somewhat surprising to find so many students acknowledging the importance of languages compared to other subjects. The perceived importance of MFL was further endorsed in question 9a (Reasons for learning a language) with many students (though by no means not all) thinking the subject would help them get a better job. A similar proportion agreed that "an educated person should be able to speak a foreign language" suggesting instrumental motivational reasons (such as career and further education) and a recognition that MFL ability may be useful in achieving this. Most students felt the number of MFL lessons should remain as they are at present representing 10% of the curriculum time available. This too suggests students of this age may grant MFL an importance even if this contradicts what they feel is enjoyable or not.

9	**Reasons for learning MFL**						
			agree	unsure	disagree	total	
a	better job (instrumental motivation)		23	15	18	56	
		%	*41*	*27*	*32*		
b	cultural interest (integrative motivation)		2	13	42	57	
		%	*4*	*23*	*74*		
c	meeting people (integrative/instrumental)		32	14	8	54	
		%	*59*	*26*	*15*		
d	indicator of education. (intellectual achievement)		23	20	15	58	
		%	*40*	*34*	*26*		
e	enjoyment		8	19	30	57	
		%	*14*	*31*	*53*		
f	lack of choice/compulsory element		33	11	13	57	
		%	*58*	*19*	*23*		

Table 31. *Ques3* results-reasons for learning a MFL.

When asked to rank the importance of MFL in the interviews from 1 (the "most useful") - 8 (the "least useful"), School 2 responses ranged from 4 to 8 with the mode ranking 5 and the mean at 3.9. In School 1 the mean was 6.4 and in School 3 was 4.3. This correlates closely to the results of *Ques2.* Once again, it seems that although students may not necessarily enjoy MFL in KS4, they acknowledge its importance even when their own plans do not specifically embrace the need for a foreign language. These findings are discussed further in the next chapter.

5.2.8 Perceived Difficulty of MFL

Significant amounts of data expressed concern at the difficulty of MFL. In *Ques2* over 90% of students felt they were trying "quite hard" or "very hard" in the subject whilst less than half felt they were actually doing well. This mismatch may of course be explained by poor classroom teacher-student communication or teenage angst that might also be evident in reactions to perceived progress in other subjects. However, none of the students felt they were making excellent progress even when they thought their teachers considered this to be true. Why might this be so? Interviews confirmed that the perceived difficulty of the subject may account for this incongruity, although differences between perceived and actual success are not uncommon in teenage students. A possible answer might be linked to the impact that the requirements of the subject makes on teenage levels of confidence. Certainly, most interviewees in Year 11 felt Languages were more difficult than their other GCSE subjects. In all schools the

number was higher than 66% of those interviewed and over three-quarters in two schools.

For the respondents of *Ques3* (see Table 32 overleaf) the total scores for perceived difficulty peak between 31-35 on the chart below with a mean of 30.96 (with a high score representing a more favourable and a low score a less favourable view of MFL). Using the weighting factors of 1-5 points per question, a neutral response to all 10 questions of *Ques3* would have returned a score of 30. The 30.96 figure therefore represents a less than positive perception of the inherent difficulties in MFL study.

By contrast APU grouped scores reached 36-40 in the graph with a mean score of 32.86. The higher score of APU survey reflects a more positive view of MFL in 1985 from a wider ability range than the more able sample of 2000.

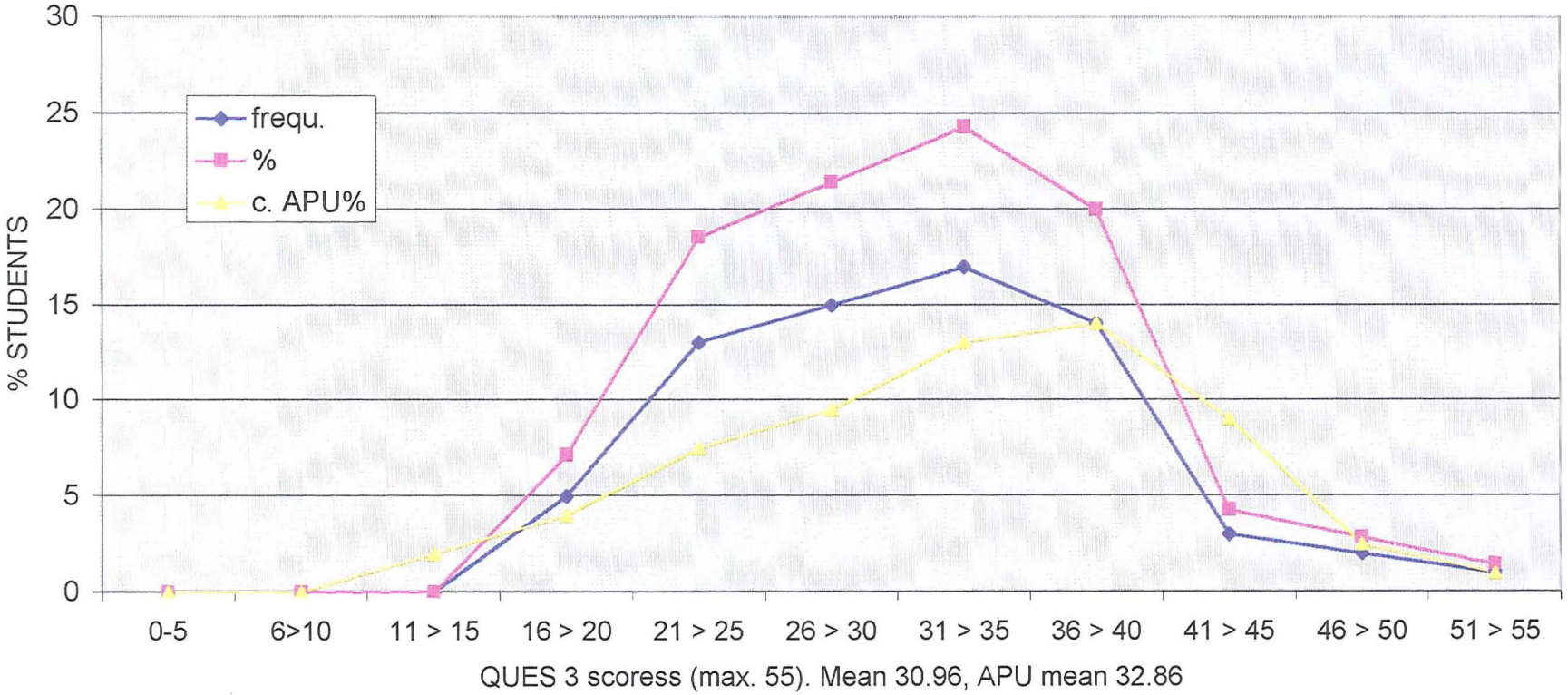


Table 32. *Ques3*. Perceived difficulty of MFL (Distribution of scores with equivalent 1985 APU)

Notwithstanding caveats previously mentioned and discussed in more detail in the section: 4.6 *Comparisons with APU Findings*, it seems the current MFL students in the sample regard the subject as a more difficult option than did their 1985 counterparts. In the graph above the APU distribution of results are more positively skewed compared to those of this study. This also appears to support the work of Clark and Trafford (1995 and 1996) and the view that more able MFL learners may see the validity of learning a language but regard the prospect of studying the subject to GCSE as difficult.

In *Ques1* and above (see 5.2.3) there is an abundance of evidence to suggest a lack of confidence in most learners that, whilst not unusual in angst-ridden teenagers, is exacerbated by the subjects' demands. In particular, there is a consequent reluctance to use the Target Language. Students dislike activities that require them to communicate with their peers in front of others, including staff, other learners, foreign language assistants and foreign visitors to the school. The embarrassment that results inhibits performance and demotivates. Again and again indications were given in the interviews that speaking the target language in front of others (who were not role-play partners/friends) prevented students from feeling positive about their work. Year 10 students reported many times about the PoS section 1 that they disliked using languages for real purposes, as this was "embarrassing," made them "nervous" and highlighted their errors. This sentiment is clearly evident in:

A communicate with each other in pairs, groups and with their teacher,
B use language for real purposes
E use every day classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech
F discuss their own ideas and discuss/compare theirs with those of others.

In *Ques2* (questions 16-17) the majority of students admitted the difficulties of responding to the TL in the classroom with a smaller proportion preferring to acknowledge that "You learn more". Less than 10% could be said to display an unequivocal positive response.

17	***How do you react when the teacher uses the language in the classroom?***	
	Interesting/makes you concentrate	7
	learn more	15
	difficult but I try	38
	off putting	11

Table 33. *Ques2* Use of MFL by respondents.

Year 11 students said again and again in the interviews "I don't like speaking" and "I prefer to work from the book". The interviews further suggested that a fear of getting it wrong in a public way may account for the extent of the dislike recorded. (Getting it right and knowing what was right was especially important for girls. For some boys accuracy appeared less of an issue. Indeed, often attempting an answer based on flimsy evidence or an instinct was often viewed as risk-taking and therefore positive). This is discussed further in chapter 6 together with conclusions from evidence of perceived difficulty in MFL study from Sections 5.2.5 and 5.2.6.

5.2.9 Contact with Europe and the Target Language Community

The evidence of *Ques3* (Table 34) shows that this variable together with "enjoyment" recorded the lowest scores when compared both with the other variables measured and with the 1985 APU results. A paltry 19.3% mean score (APU 26.94%) suggests that very few MFL students in the area wish to form closer links with their French and German counterparts and is clearly evident in the graph below. This is also confirmed in a very real way by the slow decline in the popularity of local school exchanges reported in chapter 3 among students who are usually at the vanguard of such school activities.

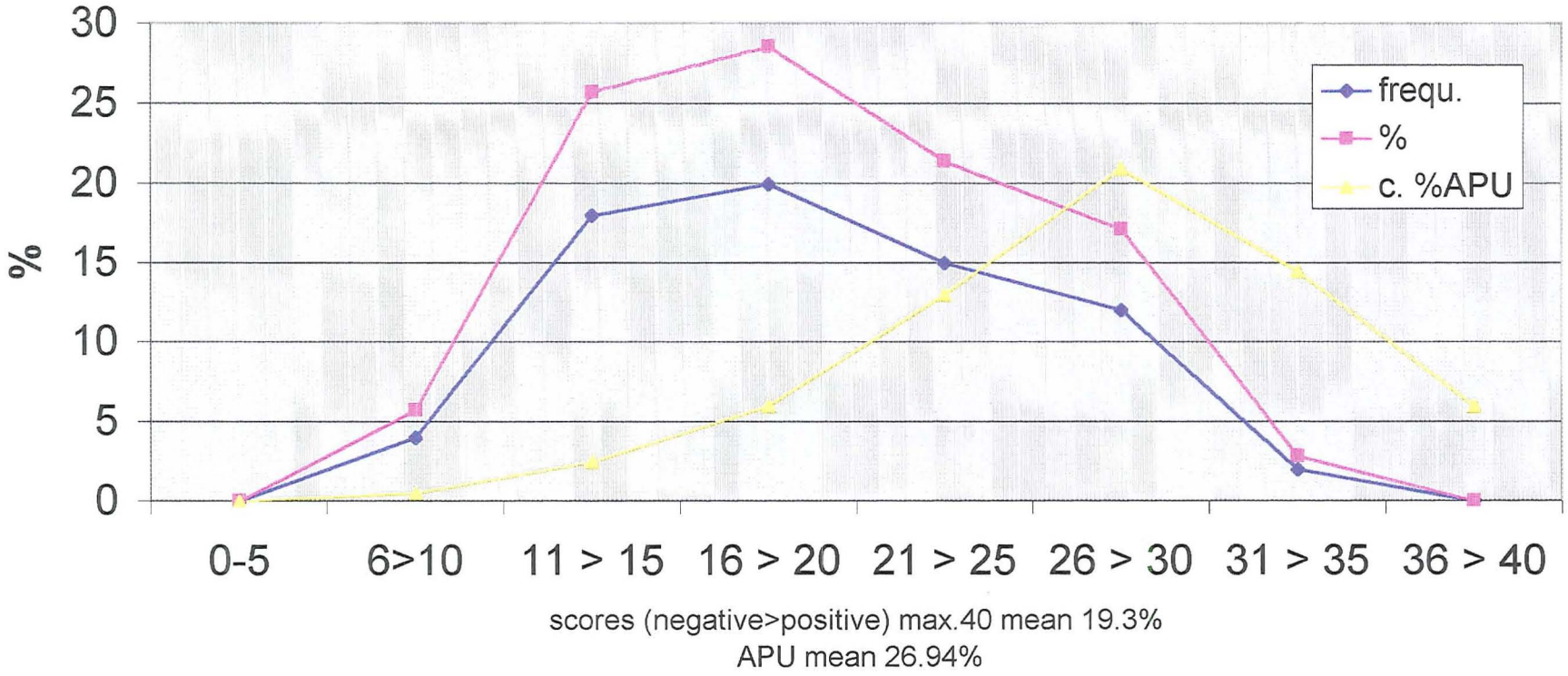


Table 34. *Ques3*. Desire for contact with foreign community (Distribution of scores with equivalent 1985 APU scores)

This is echoed in the *Ques2* (9B) question (Reasons for learning French/German) where the majority responded negatively to showing interest in the French/Germans and their way of life.

9	***Reasons for learning MFL***					
			agree	unsure	disagree	total
b	cultural interest (integrative motivation)		2	13	42	57
		%	*4*	*23*	*74*	

Table 35. *Ques2* Expressing a wish for contact with the Target Language Community.

This singular lack of integrative motivation is echoed further in the responses to questions 22-25 where the pupils almost exclusively mentioned the more traditional Mediterranean holiday destinations (such as Greece and Spain) as places they would most like to visit. Only 2 students identified France or Germany as countries they might like to visit. Virtually no respondents interpreted the phrase "would like to visit" in anything other than a leisure context such as a holiday. Whilst some respondents did mention the "culture" of the country visited or of the country one wished to visit, none of these responses included France or Germany. It is therefore probable that, when asked to think of the more desirable counties one might most like to visit, few would make that choice on the basis of the cultural or educational aspects that could enhance MFL learning. This lack of integrative motivation must impact on the business of language learning but clearly reflects a more widespread perception of the relative unimportance of close European neighbours.

The interviews further recorded the absence of general educational or linguistic motives when considering Europe as a possible travel destination. Perhaps, however, the most revealing responses are to questions 25-6 in *Ques2* to which the majority of students reported an unreadiness to learn the language of any country visited. The positive and negative responses to question 26 ("Would you consider working abroad?") are too close at 41% and 59% respectively to be of significance but responses to question 25 are more conclusive with over two thirds expressing a reluctance to learn the language of the country visited.

25	***Learn language?***	Yes	17	*33%*
		No	35	*67%*
			52	
26	***Consider work abroad?***			
		Yes	21	***41%***
		No	30	***59%***
			51	

Table 36. *Ques2* Student readiness to learn language of country visited and to work abroad.

It would require further research to establish reasons for this unambiguous response. It is however important here to record the reluctance to learn another's language as just that and not evidence of ethnocentricity. Many respondents commented that they "wouldn't bother" when asked if they would learn the language of the country visited. This response could equally well reveal a reluctance to invest time and effort in another European language (as this was unlikely to be one studied in school) or, equally, in a language perceived to be relatively unimportant in instrumental motivational terms (e.g. Greek or Portuguese).

Indeed, the ethnocentricity discovered among English speaking students towards French by Lambert (1961) is not supported by these findings. Most students reported positive views of the people of countries they had visited including EC countries closer to the UK. Responses to question 21 remind us however this figure is more likely to include view of people in holiday locations. Leisure factors might elicit a more positive view. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority offered positive views of other nationalities.

20	***Countries visited***	EC		47	*68*	%
		Americas		15	*22*	%
		Africa		5	*7*	%
		Asia		2	*3*	%
		Australasia		0	***0***	%
				69		
21	***Views of people were:***		Positive	42	*88*	%
			unclear/neutral	3	*6*	%
			negative	3	*6*	%

Table 37. *Ques2* Countries visited by students and views of their people.

Only a small number offered explicitly negative views on European nationalities. Question 27 of *Ques2* offered respondents an opportunity to choose from an array of positive and negative comments on nationalities, which were retained from the original version of the questionnaire (Chambers, 1993). Among students of French *Ques2* revealed no clear bias against the French or German people or culture. Equally pupils of German had positive, neutral and negative observations to make about Germans and the French. It is therefore likely that 15 year-old students of average to higher ability are as likely to make a positive comment as a negative or neutral comment when expressing an opinion on nationalities.

Whilst it was not exclusively so, many students refused to offer stereotypical answers to questions on nationality when given the opportunity. One respondent commented "I feel it is important not to score (sic) people you don't know" and this was a sentiment reflected in the opinions of many other participants.

27		*What are your views of the following nationalities?*	
	Germans		%
	positive	27	*48*
	negative	22	*39*
	unclear/neutral	7	*13*
	total	56	
	French		
	positive	24	*48*
	negative	21	*42*
	unclear/neutral	5	*10*
	total	50	
	British		
	positive	41	*76*
	negative	12	*22*
	unclear/neutral	1	*2*
		54	

Table 38. *Ques2* Student perceptions of French/German/British people.

The interviews (question 2) also attracted some positive and negative responses to the question in roughly equal measure with some attempting to differentiate between the country/culture and the people. The highest proportion however returned neutral responses to the question-in one school it was as high as 78%. The most commonly observed reason for this neutrality was " I don't know any French/German people apart from my teacher".

Ques2 and 3 may well suggest a reluctance to meet French and German counterparts, visit their country or learn their language but this does not seem to indicate any

particular antagonistic view of mainland Europeans among the sample. The construct may be explained to an indeterminate degree by a different perception encountered in *Ques2* -namely that most students do not know French or German nationals (question 33) and may not openly seek their acquaintance (question 9). It cannot therefore be assumed that the students in this study have a particularly sympathetic or antagonistic view of French and/or Germans. This is discussed further in the next chapter.

5.2.10 Perceptions of MFL Staff

The perceptions of the MFL staff from the three schools are incorporated into the graphs of *Ques1* and can be found in the appendices. The reader will recall from the section on data collection that staff teaching the sample were asked to complete the students' questionnaire to try to attempt to anticipate the views of the students. The projected results were then compared with the actual results. These choices are represented by yellow stars on the graphs from *Ques1*.

It appears from this data MFL Staff often know what their students like and dislike. In many cases MFL teachers appear to know in an approximate way what their students may enjoy and what they may dislike. Often the staff choice from the five possible options correctly indicated a positive or negative trend in the class even if there was no precise agreement of views. Occasionally, there were instances in the data where two opposing blocks appeared on the graphs indicating a possible polarisation of views with teachers correctly taking the mean.

Often staff know pupil preferences in a more general way (for example School 3 1C, 1D). However, there is also evidence for less accurate judgements where staff are sometimes dramatically wrong in their assumptions. This is evident in School 3 evidence (1B 1E 1F 2J) but also in the other schools. In School 1 the teacher correctly anticipated the students' choices in c.12 instances but overestimated the popularity of 13 items in the PoS. In only 6 examples did the teacher underestimate the popularity of activities. In School 2 and School 3 staff correctly anticipated their students' opinions in 22 and 13 categories respectively. But here the views of the staff largely underestimated the perceived popularity in 10 and 15 instances respectively.

5.2.11 Comparisons with APU Findings

The importance of the APU research to any investigation into pupil attitudes towards languages has already been detailed in previous chapters. It is now appropriate to balance the 1985 findings with those of this investigation to record the areas where pupil attitudes may or may not have changed.

Firstly however, it is relevant to restate the difficulties inherent in any attempt to correlate findings of APU 1985 and this survey. The methodological problems do not end with differences in population. Chapter 7 of the 1985 APU report examined attitudes towards MFL study but chapter eight examined student responses to contemporaneous, language learning tasks. The definitions of MFL skills and classroom tasks are different to those of the PoS. The APU report focused on pupil responses to learning activities by eliciting reactions to 34 classroom exercises that would however be recognised by today's staff and students (with a few notable exceptions). Pupils were asked, for example, for their responses to "Asking each other questions in French" or "Practising short conversations with a friend". The tasks were subdivided into six sections that broadly reflect combinations of the current four MFL Attainment Targets. In addition to "Listening and listening/speaking", "Speaking and speaking/reading", "Reading" and "Writing and reading/writing" two further sections were named "Learning" (describing rote-learning activities) and "Other", which listed a variety of exercises from singing songs and watching a video/TV programme to doing a project.

Three of these tasks might cause comment among today's MFL students. "Talking in English about a French story you have read" would not conform to the current policy on use of the target language. Equally "writing a made-up story in French" or "writing in French about something you did", seems far too unstructured and open-ended for the modern classroom and Year 9 pupils with lower levels of literacy and less tolerance of text manipulation. "Singing French songs" is undoubtedly still practised in KS3 MFL lessons but was recognised as a discrete activity by APU possibly more than it might be today.

The PoS by contrast requires explaining to students. "Use context and other clues to interpret meaning ", for example, is not always clear to pupils and may account for the higher incidence of the "Not sure" or neutral vote in *Ques1* compared to equivalent

elements in the APU data. In all three schools in the sample there is more neutrality or uncertainty expressed towards the PoS than students expressed of the APU tasks. This is possible evidence of the broader nature of PoS descriptors or the study design and consequences of a smaller local study. It might also reflect a genuinely more ambivalent response to MFL.

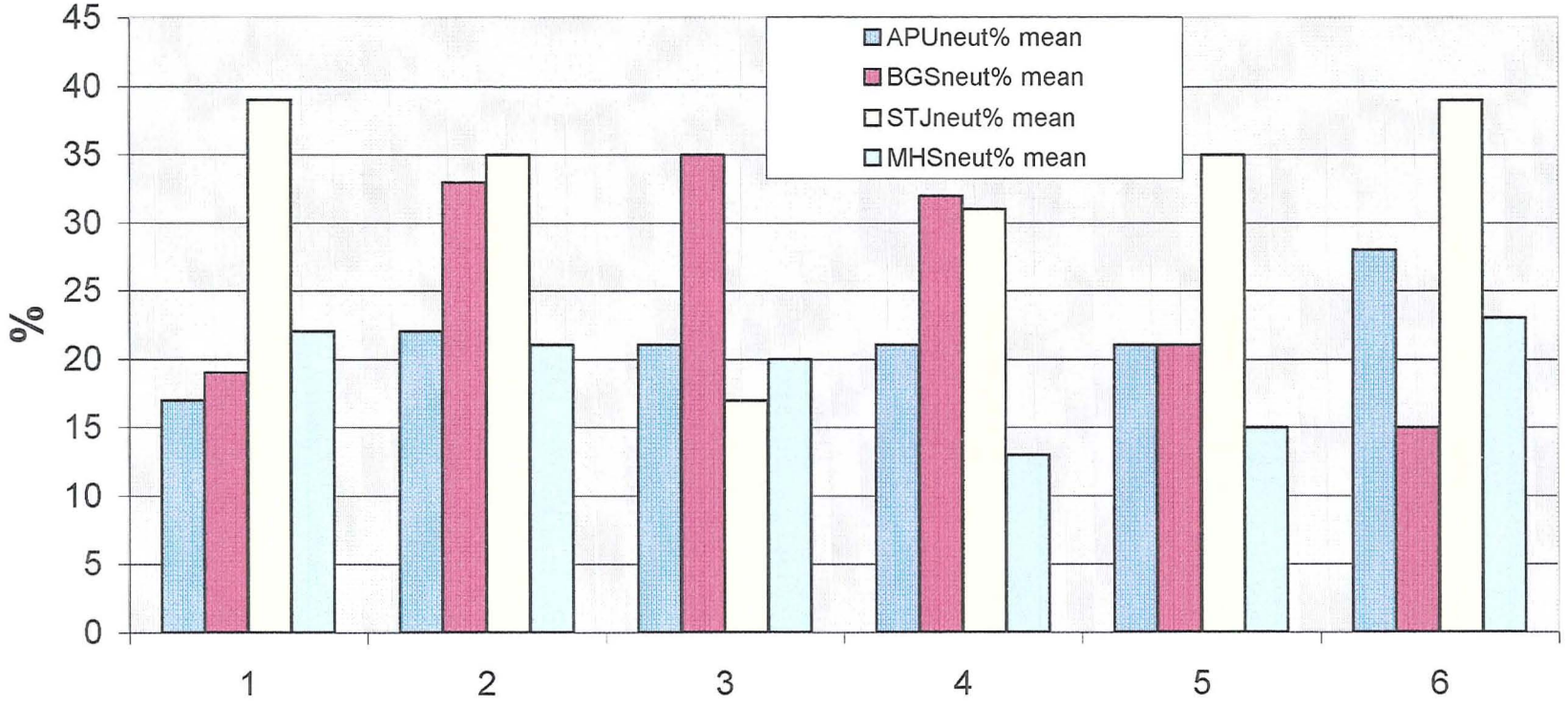


Table 39. APU /Sample neutral responses to classroom tasks (please note BGS=Sch.1, STJ=Sch. 2, MHS=Sch. 3)

Of course, Part 1 of the Programme of Study was never intended for dissemination to students. Some of the skills in the 34 tasks listed by APU are combined within the same PoS descriptor. ("Develop understanding and skills through a range of language activities, *e.g. games, role-plays, surveys and other investigations".* "Listen, read or view for personal interest and enjoyment as well as for information".) It follows therefore that any general comparison between the PoS and APU survey is complicated by these and other descriptor differences. Only in a few instances is it possible to make a direct textual link between the two documents. For example "Reading aloud in French to the class" (APU survey) can be linked to 1(i) "Read hand-written and printed texts of different types and of varying lengths and, where appropriate, read aloud". It was possible in 10 instances to make such an explicit link between the two sources of data. In a further 26 instances it was possible to make a link of a more general nature although it was necessary to acknowledge that a single task from the APU survey may overlap with two items of the PoS. In the following instances it was possible to make such links.

APU 1985: Task descriptor	**PoS reference**
AT1/2	
List.to MFL. on cassette	**1h, 2a**
List. to teacher using MFL.	**2b**
Repeating words / phrases .	**2f**
Answering T's ques. in MFL about a cassette you have list. to.	**1a, 1h**
Answering T's ques. in MFL.	**1h**
Answering T's ques. in MFL.about a passage in the book	**1h, 2j**
AT 2/3	
Acting out MFL conversations,(role-plays) in front of class.	**1c, 1d**
Practising short conversations with a friend	**1a,**
Talking to assistant.	1f, 2c 2e 2g 3g,3i
Asking each other questions.	**1a, 2g**
Making a recording of yourself speaking MFL.	
Reading aloud in MFL to the class.	**1i**
AT3	
Summarise in english a story/passage you have read.	**2m**
Reading MFL magazine/reader by yourself.	**1g, 1i, 3e**
Reading passage from MFL textbook.	**1i**
Reading about France/Germany.	**4**
Translating story/sentences into English.	**3d, 3e**
AT4	
Writing answers in MFL to questions on a worksheet	**1j**
Copying vocab. from the board or book	**2k**
Writing answers in MFL to questions in book	**1j**
Composing a story in MFL.	**1j, 2i**

Writing about yourself in MFL	**1j 2h**
Writing in MFL about something you did	**1j, 2i**
Writing down words or short sentences in MFL	**1j**
Writing a letter in MFL	**1j, 2i**
Learning	
Learning verbs.	3f
Learning a conversation.	3a
Learning a list of MFL. words	**3a, 3b**

Table 40. Student Attitudes to MFL tasks/activities-APU and PoS

In most instances, where it has been possible to cross-reference tasks from APU and the PoS, the positive response is more pronounced in the APU survey. This contrast might be said to endorse in a general way the findings on the low levels of perceived enjoyment among local, contemporary students reported in Section 5.2.2. The conclusions of the juxtaposition of survey data with APU findings are continued in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS:

6.1 The working hypothesis.

Before returning to the aims of this investigation it is appropriate at this stage to consider the working hypothesis proposed in chapter 4 before turning to the four aims of the study. The working hypothesis tested in this research was whether there is a continuum in MFL learning that stretches from more positive beginnings in KS3 to a more negative outlook in later years among average and more able students in three West Essex 11-16 Schools.

The findings of this study suggest a "Yes" conclusion to this question. They represent compelling evidence to support the view that Languages do indeed become a less attractive proposition for most average and able linguists between the ages of 13 and 15 in the three schools. They further suggest that there are indications of a deteriorating popularity from an already low base in year 9 and that the rate of decline might be more rapid than in other secondary school subjects.

This is the main finding of this report. Indices of student responses towards usefulness of the subject, relevancy, perceived difficulty and enjoyment all measure (for a student) the attractiveness or otherwise of a GCSE subject compared to other subjects in the curriculum. Year 9 measurements of perceived enjoyment were already low in all three schools compared to other subjects and the results of previous research and getting demonstrably lower in Year 10. In Year 11 the observed fall in popularity continued although the trend was sometimes complicated by a wish for examination success expressed by some students.

Furthermore, Foreign Languages face dismal prospects in year 12. Virtually no students expressed an interest in A/S Level signalling that when they get, post 16, beyond the compulsory requirements of the National Curriculum few choose to study the subject. National figures for French and German at A-Level also reveal a steady decline since 1992. (DfES statistics branch). Instrumental motivation may be sufficient for GCSE but integrative is required for post 16 MFL study.

Why is this? What might have caused such a deterioration in the way pupils approach and respond to languages since the positive findings of the 1985 APU research? It is important to acknowledge there are many possible factors that might have contributed to this situation and that are not necessarily tested by this study design. Possible factors may include the negative impact of the GCSE from 1988 and subsequent innovations (this is unlikely), developments in school curricula that have changed the relationship between MFL and other subjects (this is more likely), a decline in the quality of teaching (this is also possible given an increasing local shortage of experienced, qualified MFL staff) and a more utilitarian approach to 14-16 education expressed by parents that may not be sympathetic to languages. It is however impossible to ignore the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1995. This more than anything else has shaped the subject and its position in the secondary curriculum. The findings of this report suggest the reasons for the declining popularity of MFL are to be found in the demands of the National Curriculum Programme of Study as well as the traditional nature of FL learning itself. The evidence for this is summarised below. Much of the evidence for these conclusions was collected in response to the key aims of 2 and 3 and consequently I would like to consider 2 and 3 first and report on each before turning to aims1 and 4.

6.2.1 Aim 2. To investigate which skills (as identified in the PoS) are preferred or disliked, to find possible reasons for these constructs and to draw conclusions from the responses in order to indicate preferred learning activities and so inform better the teaching and learning of MFL.

The results of *Ques1* detailed in the last chapter list which activities and skills are preferred and which are disliked. *Ques2-3* and the interviews seek to find reasons for the constructs. The conclusions fall into the following categories:

- Student Confidence
- Perceived Enjoyment
- Perceived Usefulness
- Perceived Difficulty
- Wish for contact with the target language community
- Relevancy and the impact of the predominance of English

6.2.2 Student Confidence

A key issue for departments remains the confidence of teenage learners and the relationship between confidence, motivation and performance. The findings detailed in chapter 5 of this paper are that learner confidence appears to be more of an issue in the processes in MFL learning than in other GCSE subjects. Indications of this are evident in the results of the questionnaires and there is an abundance in the taped interviews. Given the natural exuberance of many students, it is something of a surprise to find such uncertainty in such measure that is clearly more than just teenage angst.

Reasons for this are complex but the lack of learner confidence and the negative impact this has on motivation would appear to stem more from the potential vulnerability caused by the emphasis on verbal communication in the classroom. For a generation obsessed by image this is potentially an area where students are unmasked; where humour, looking "cool", quick- witted responses or physical dexterity cannot deflect attention in class oral work; they cannot help the pupil hide the fact s/he cannot answer the question whilst exposed to the scrutiny of peers. For boys especially, who are at this age verbally less developed and often less inclined to collaborative working, the results can be disastrous. Indeed, not many GCSE subjects (with the possible exception of music) expect students to interact with staff and each other and in front of each other in a foreign code to the same extent as GCSE Languages.

Aim 2 requires the researcher to find possible reasons for the constructs (offered by students in response to the PoS) and to draw conclusions from the responses in order to indicate preferred learning activities. Accordingly, it must be reported that the bulk of negative evidence encountered concerned the use of the target language in the classroom in response to the following PoS skills:
A communicate with each other in pairs, groups and with their teacher,
B use language for real purposes
E use every day classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech
F discuss their own ideas and discuss/compare theirs with those of others.

If it behoves staff to find ways to minimise this negative impact on learning inherent in the above then the challenge for MFL teachers is complex. The question now becomes how might it be possible to minimise the negative impact of skills that constitute

essential language learning practices? This issue is considered in chapter 7 and the question of oracy continues in the next section.

6.2.3 Perceived Enjoyment

Only a small proportion of the field would admit enjoying the subject. Only two students in 39 interviewed admitted to liking MFL enough to take the subject to A/S Level. The majority (between 50-78%) would "probably not" or "absolutely not" study MFL post 16.

The "10%" of students (across the full ability range) that Chambers (1993) found positively disposed towards MFL study post 16 does not compare well with local findings. More research is required in this field to determine to what extent this picture is replicated in other local schools within the LEA.

The findings suggest that teaching quality alone cannot explain the rise in the unpopularity of languages in these three schools. It is extremely unlikely this can this explain such an overwhelmingly negative view. The current 2002 staffing difficulties in MFL departments were less apparent in 1998 when the study began and not a experience of this sample. Throughout the course of the investigation the samples from all three schools were taught by UK trained, experienced staff.

There is also a wealth of evidence from *Ques2* that indicates perceived enjoyment levels of other GCSE subjects are consistently higher in all three schools. It cannot therefore be simply a matter of teenage students becoming *generally* more dissatisfied with the secondary school experience and with all or most GCSE subjects. Indeed, the evidence from *Ques2* suggests that the typical attitude profile of the sample means such students are more likely to:

- have a more positive view rather than a more negative view of school:
- express an opinion on what is best rather than worst about school:
- note the enjoyment of the social aspects of school life but also acknowledge the enjoyment in achievement;
- never truant to avoid MFL;
- try hard in the subject.

It must therefore be reported that more able 13-15 year-old MFL learners in West Essex enjoy Languages less than other subjects when beginning Key Stage Four and moving towards GCSE despite the best intentions of teachers, the National Curriculum and a host of initiatives.

A small number of these students might have been expected to continue language study into Year 12. Indeed, it would not be unreasonable to assume that this happens with most of the major disciplines, certainly Maths, English and Science classes are often full in local Tertiary Colleges at Harlow and Epping Forest.

Following the mode of interrogation outlined at the beginning of Chapter 4 it is now proposed to present the findings of this investigation within the context of the wider problematic field.

The data of the previous chapter also reflect the findings of other more recent and larger scale studies referred to in the Literature Review. In particular, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded work of Stables and Wikeley indicated similar trends in subject preference in Year 9 cohorts in ten West of England comprehensives. In the initial study in 1984, the authors report French and German at or near the bottom of the list of preferred subjects. Only Religious Education, Drama and Music fared worse. In the later work of 1996 both languages (French and German) feature alongside RE on the lowest rank. Only 8% of those interviewed placed MFL among their three most enjoyable subjects. By contrast Drama and Music-that had been so unpopular in 1984-were listed among the top three subjects by over half those taking them. The scoring system used enabled the researchers to identify positive dislike of MFL as opposed to simple indifference.

> Thus, while one highly unpopular subject in 1984 had increased in popularity, Modern Languages had declined. (Stables and Wilkeley, 1999, p.28).

Few pupils in interview revealed pleasure in MFL learning. Use of the target language seems to be a principal de-motivating factor in language learning, whether it is the use of the TL in the classroom by the teacher or the expectation of developing its use from pair-work to a wider audience. The embarrassment that results inhibits performance and de-motivates. There is an explicit expectation in the PoS for MFL teachers to deliver

these skills yet plenty of evidence reported in the previous chapter to link it with pupil discouragement. Again and again indications were given in the interviews that speaking the target language in front of others (who were not role-play partners/friends) prevented students from feeling positive about their work. Year 11 students said again and again in the interviews "I don't like speaking" and "I prefer to work from the book". The interviews further suggested that a fear of getting it wrong in a public way may account for the extent of the dislike recorded. Ironically, the requirement of speaking the language was also felt to be depriving some students of their own language as a tool of communication rather than furnishing them with another. Expecting students to choose the TL if they wish to communicate often means that student chooses silence. When asked to respond in interviews to speaking related activities in the PoS students from all schools expressed ideas of anticipated failure. "I'd have a go but I'd probably get it wrong" was a not untypical reaction. If the sample data is an accurate reflection of student attitudes then local schools have serious problems with poor levels of MFL oracy. A reluctance of sample year 11 pupils to respond to speaking challenges within weeks of scheduled GCSE Speaking Tests is particularly worrying.

This ultimately may explain the relative popularity of role-play within the MFL canon. Pupils may perceive oral work as unavoidable and therefore contend that if speaking must occur then preferably with a pair-work partner and friend that can help and not threaten confidence. The popularity of role-play reported in chapter 5 may mask a bigger problem.

Yet, speaking is crucial to progress. Clearly speaking as a skill in response to listening, leading to supported, then independent speaking is universally recognised in any language learning process. The relative impact of such reluctance to engage in this process can be gauged from the analogy of the Art student who prefers not to draw in an attempt to place a painting on a blank page. This is a ridiculous proposition yet its MFL equivalent is evidently prevalent in local classrooms and goes unrecognised.

Attempts driven by the National Curriculum to increase the use of the target language in classrooms may have addressed a crucial failing of earlier MFL teaching but has done little to improve pupil self-image as MFL learners in KS4.

> Pedagogical innovations, notably target-language teaching ..... (has) done nothing to improve pupils' self-images as language learners and may have done the reverse. (Stables & Wikeley, 1997. pp.393).

Similar reluctance was found in pupils' interaction with the Language Assistant (FLA). Although an interesting exception emerged in the revelation that students found conversation practice with young foreign nationals or university students more enjoyable than with older mature foreign nationals. This is further evidence for the view that adults are perceived to be linguistically competent: teenagers or young adults not. In addition, foreign teenage visitors to schools have the advantage of raising the levels of integrative motivation in the host students. MFL teachers will often echo the huge amounts of curiosity occasioned by the impending arrival of foreign visitors that can drive attempts at communication between British and foreign students.

There is a further consideration. It may be that teenagers perceive classroom teachers and other adults to be the organisers of the work and controllers of that environment. but students are not perceived in the same way. There is therefore less of a power differential between young foreign students and teenage MFL learners. Perceptions of power differentials are almost inevitable in most classrooms (Edwards and Mercer, 1987; Young, 1992) and can have a deleterious effect on pupil motivation-especially if that motivation is challenged by the need to interact with peers in front of other peers.

There may be a parallel in the anecdotal information offered by the small number of students who have had successful experiences on foreign language exchanges. Frequently reported is the boost to confidence enjoyed by the student after conversations with younger, pre-school or primary school children (often the younger siblings of exchange partners). They are seen as linguistically less accomplished than older children and therefore less threatening in the process of building confidence in speaking. Adults are seen as more demanding monitors of progress or inertia and thus potentially confidence threatening. Many MFL teachers recognise the experience of silencing a previously working role-play exercise by simply appearing at the shoulder of the nervous couple.

6.2.4 Perceived Usefulness

It seems that although students may not necessarily enjoy MFL in year KS4, they may acknowledge its importance even when their own plans do not specifically embrace the need for a foreign language. This finding also correlates closely with the findings of Stables and Wikeley. In both their 1984 and 1996 surveys French and German were of roughly "middling importance" at equal 6th out of 14. This is also the case here.

Findings from chapter 5 might suggest that some students may be willing to acknowledge the usefulness of languages even when this view contradicts their own experiences. In other words pupils are prepared to accept the notion that languages are "useful" because this is what staff or parents tell them even if there is evidently no perceived "usefulness" experienced in the short-term and any "usefulness" is always linked to the application of a language in the future. The time-scale is important here. Students' attitudes to MFL study may hold the "belief" or "value" that Languages are inherently "important" or "useful" or both but this of necessity an investment view in any future application. "Belief" and "value" were defined in Chapter 2 as representing:

> more long-term constructs that contain judgements on the value and state of things as perceived by the individual. Beliefs are viewed as constructs that may guide behaviour but not ultimately direct it. (Elms, 1976, p. 28)

Students may express a "belief" that languages in schools are valuable but this may not reflect their feelings towards or sensory awareness of the subject on a daily basis. It is therefore possible to express ideas of MFL's usefulness but at the same time a dislike of the subject.

The more long-term investment represented in MFL study renders the subject as less than useful in the eyes of its learners. This is especially so given the increasing utilitarian view of secondary education in 11-16 schools in the 1990's.

MFL as a subject is also perceived as "difficult" and to the teenager subjects that are "difficult" might also be "useful" as Higher Level GCSE Maths and Science demonstrate. The teachers of these subjects on the three schools will readily acknowledge that Maths and Science are also often perceived to be "difficult". High

levels of instrumental motivation permit a high level of tolerance especially in Maths that limits disaffection in the subject. Whilst the same tolerance levels are not evident in MFL there is some appreciation in Year 11 in all three schools of the formula that difficult = important/useful. This is discussed further in the next section on perceived difficulty.

Also noted in the 1997 Stables and Wikeley review of findings was a strong utilitarian view with many interviewees explaining that a language was not required for the choice of career. Only 7% of respondents placed a language among the top three subjects based on importance in Year 10 and was the subject most would like to drop. Many Year 9 students listed MFL among the least important subjects. By contrast, the findings of this survey may indicate a more positive view of the importance MFL may represent. In School 2 Languages were perceived as "difficult" but ultimately "useful". In School 3 there were similar findings but among the more negative respondents in the interviews there was less evidence of MFL usefulness and a greater level of resistance to the notion that a good result in MFL would help get a better job. This was even more pronounced in School 1 where MFL study was least popular. Here was found the least difference between observations on the perceived enjoyment of Languages and the perceived usefulness. MFL were generally ranked low in terms of enjoyment and quite low in terms of usefulness.

The perceived importance of subjects generally and MFL in particular seems to be based on often naïve ideas of what might help a student in a career. This is partially confirmed in the evidence of *Ques2* above but also in the reasons given in the interviews. "I don't need French/German as I'm not going to work abroad", was a commonly expressed sentiment. This was common to all schools but was a particularly prevalent view in School 1. Other studies have reported similar reactions. "There's no point in doing RE unless you're going to be a vicar". (Stables and Wikeley, 1999, p.29). This also echoes Clark and Trafford's concern that students from less privileged backgrounds find it difficult to recognise the more intangible benefits of language learning.

Ques2 also enabled us to gain some understanding of students perceptions of the importance of languages when influenced by "significant others". Questions 30-33 illustrate how students in the sample are unlikely to have parents that have knowledge

of a language, know a foreign national or feel they are making good progress in the opinions of their teachers. If parents are unable to provide a positive learning example towards languages it is not surprising they are held in such low esteem by students. Fishbein's "Attitude towards the act" contends that it not only the individual's beliefs and evaluation of those beliefs in determining a inclination towards performing an act (e.g. taking part in a classroom speaking task) but also the contribution made by "the subjective norm", namely that individual's judgement of what significant others would think of his/her likely participation in that act and how much the individual might value that opinion. It is undeniable that those interviewees that regularly took holidays abroad and had parents employed in managerial and other middle class employment exhibited a more positive view towards MFL learning.

There was no evidence to suggest students understood that MFL study prepared them for further language study whether this might be textual analysis in literature studies or learning another language ab initio in later life. The idea that knowledge of grammar in French or German could explain the structure of the mother-tongue or help learn Arabic or Chinese is alien to most sixteen year olds. Evidently, the view that MFL teachers are adding an international dimension to the school curriculum is often false when their students are locked into a mind-set that considers the subject in such a short-term, expedient way. Few students if any in this study showed an awareness that studying French or German held any significance other than "going to France/Germany". If this is universally true then educators have missed a great opportunity to maximise the application of foreign language study and genuinely internationalise the curriculum.

6.2.5 Perceived Difficulty

> I don't really enjoy learning Foreign Languages as they can be quite tedious and I find most languages difficult. (Kevin, Bucks school, cited in NLI 2000, p.72.)

Languages are seen by the students in this survey as "difficult". Yet, pupils' understanding of "difficulty" is often influenced by other factors notably levels of perceived failure or success in the subject or, indeed, perceived usefulness of the subject. As referred to in the previous section, other subjects notably Maths and Science are also sometimes perceived to be difficult among students in the sample. However, there is sufficient instrumental motivation in most students to enable them to

tolerate the greater demands of the more challenging subjects, which are thought be useful. Both subjects feature prominently in rankings of importance in *Ques2*. French and German are seen by the sample as less vital in terms of learning for life and career prospects and so the tolerance to challenging or onerous material such as use of tenses or vocabulary learning is lower. This may also explain the readiness of teenage MFL learners to be more vociferous in their comments about KS4 Languages than they might about other GCSE subjects. This phenomenon was noted by previous researchers. Stern (1983) points out,

> Any language teacher - and for that matter any learner - can testify that language learning often involves strong positive or negative emotions. (p.35).

Is MFL genuinely more difficult than their other subjects or not? In many ways it may not matter as the important factor here is that they are perceived to be so. There is anecdotal evidence from teachers to suggest Languages are more difficult than other GCSE subjects in KS4.

> It is obvious to many language teachers that what a pupil is expected to do to obtain a Grade C language GCSE is significantly harder than in some subjects. M.Purves, Ecclesbourne School, Derby. (quoted in the Nuffield Languages Inquiry, p.46.)

6.2.6 Contact with the target language community

> "Very few MFL students in the area wish to form closer links with their French and German counterparts", (Chapter 5).

The students in this study have neither a particularly sympathetic, nor antagonistic view of the French or Germans. Whilst it is refreshing to find a refusal to condemn others on account of nationality this may be a misleading conclusion. The unavoidable finding to this key question for many able students on the fringes of adulthood and Euroland may be that the issue may simply not arise because they consider it important, don't know any French or Germans and consequently have no information on which to base a judgement.

This view is certainly suggested by all the evidence quoted in chapter 5. It also suggests the issue is not deemed to be important enough to warrant more than cursory consideration. It simply doesn't arise. This may be on account of age (most haven't thought about it yet) or for reasons more to do with social environment and background (many parents/adults may not have thought about the issue either) or relative/selective socio-political isolation from mainland Europe and EC issues. What is not speculation however is that whatever school-based attempts there may have been to tackle the issue have been singularly unsuccessful in changing attitudes. The response of interviewees and speculation might suggest a value system among most respondents that does not acknowledge the increasing importance of, and inevitability of contact with Europe.

The findings of APU (DES/DENI/WO, 1985: p390) maintain that a student of MFL is more likely to feel positive about the TL country after an exchange to that country than the pupil who has not had this experience. If the notion that the learner's attitude towards the target language culture is the single most important factor in the acquisition of a second language (Gardner and Lambert, 1972), then this may explain the low levels of motivation in local second language acquisition.

6.2.7 The issue of relevancy and the impact of the predominance of English

> Heavy metal is law! (Graffiti in Muslim Quarter, Sarajevo.)
> If English was good enough for Jesus Christ, it's good enough for me.
> (USA Congressman, quoted in The Guardian, 30 April, 1988. Both quotes cited by Bryson, 1991, p. 173 & p.190).

Such low levels of integrative motivation as those reported in this survey can hardly fail to have a negative impact on MFL learning in the classroom. The data provided by *Ques3* and detailed above would suggest that such a lack of enthusiasm goes beyond mere British insularity. In other sections of this investigation the conclusions suggest the nature of language learning and the Programmes of Study may provide reasons for the disaffection, but let us focus in this section on the nature of language learning within a wider context. What faces the British teenager learning a European language at the interface between that language and English? In particular, what effect does the dominant position of English have on the student perceptions of the European language and consequent rates of linguistic progress?

Chapter Five reported that most respondents had travelled to European countries but would not necessarily choose France or Germany as a country worth visiting; most students are not negatively inclined towards either country, have no particularly strong views about our European neighbours in general and are as likely to consider working abroad in the future as not, but would not consider learning their language(s).

The predominance of English in Europe (and our students experience thereof) must play a role in this. When such students travel to continental Europe and experience the rudimentary English of the French campsite manager or the Spanish hotelier it has a colossal impact on the word-shy English. It is no accident that glossy holiday brochures list alongside the scenic attractions of a resort the friendly, polyglot qualities of the hotel staff. "English spoken" signs welcome the British throughout Europe and deliver that all important message, "Here you can feel and act as if at home"-linguistically and possibly also culturally.

English is undeniably the *lingua franca* of the contemporary world and recognised as such by the parents and public. There is every reason why the campsite owner and hotelier mentioned above should learn English. But it is more than just the commercial self-interest of tourism. Increasing globalisation in commerce and advances in technology mean that economically active societies look to communicate in English. A recent BBC Radio 4 estimate suggests more than 60% of European internet traffic uses English. The Head of the European Bank, Wim Duisenberg, spoke English in a 2001 inaugural speech that launched the countdown to the Euro to other EC Finance Ministers and government officials that did not include the British. German engineers working for VW in the Shanghai speak English to their Chinese and Korean counterparts. Globalisation has ensured that English thrives beyond the English world.

> English has emerged as the first global language in an age where a global language is both possible and necessary. It is the language of science, technology and technical communication; the language medium for global investment, aviation, development aid and medicine. New strategies for survival in fields as diverse as food supply, the human genome or mastery of space are unlikely to be brokered in another language. For anyone involved in international business it has become a basic requirement and the Indian subcontinent as much as North

> America relates to the global economy in English. (Nuffield Languages Inquiry. 2000, p.14.).

A conservative estimate would suggest that I.5 billion people speak our language globally. Some observers maintain this figure might be as high as 3.5 billion. A staggering 40% of mainland Europeans speak English competently (O'Leary, 1998). Chambers (1999) discovered widespread use of English among the parents of pupils in Kiel in North Germany but only a third of parents of school students in Leeds professing a knowledge of a foreign language (usually French). The business of learning English is said to be Britain's sixth largest industry and the source of invisible earnings worth over £500 million per annum.

The 1.5 billion non-English speakers of English around the world are in the vast majority of cases professionally successful adults such as our entrepreneurial French campsite owner or Spanish hotel manager for whom there are compelling reasons for learning and using a Foreign Language. The engineers and sales teams cited by Bill Bryson (1991, p.3) from EC countries and working in the Far East or closer to home have every reason to use English as the most effective means of communicating with colleagues from other language backgrounds; their targets (and ultimately, careers) depend on it. These are trained adults, and, impressive as the use of English by non-UK nationals is, this merely reinforces the need for their own children to learn English and does nothing to further the arguments to promote foreign language use among UK schoolchildren. It does however provide the same successful UK professionals working in other European countries with compelling evidence of the gale of English that is sweeping the globe and every opportunity to question the value of learning a language.

Many students in the sample had been to mainland European countries, in many cases, several times and, in interviews, explicitly refused to recognise a purpose in learning a foreign language when they encounter so much evidence of competent English speaking by their EC neighbours. Regrettably, this message was often reinforced by school language trips and exchanges on which students discovered they could get by in English-despite the encouragements or admonishments of their teachers.

Simon X, ICT trained and a successful manager with an American logistics multinational, is now in his early thirties. He grew up around and was educated in

School 3 in this research and learned both French and German to Year 9. He is however monolingual and after five years in Munich and high levels of motivation can hold a rudimentary conversation in German. He has a grasp of tense and gender and would probably achieve level 5 in NC Attainment Target 2 (Speaking) terms. He communicates freely and recognises most commons signs. However, he cannot communicate in writing and when registers develop beyond the everyday, socially or professionally, the medium reverts to English. Simon transferred to Paris in 2001 where these linguistic experiences have been replicated. He successfully recalls some phrases from his schooldays but these do not extend beyond ordering metro tickets or food in restaurants let alone basic conversations in either of these locations. He is not unduly troubled by this and knows he can get by. Far from teaching British adults the value of a foreign language, travel and work abroad may achieve the opposite. The commercially adept British remain essentially pragmatic and therefore largely monolingual. This lesson learned is fashioned by their success in European markets of today. It is not influenced by a more long-term vision of linguistic investment that could bring yet greater personal and commercial success. The lesson is quickly absorbed by British colleagues and eventually the next generation. It is tempting to conclude this may be something mercantile Britain has always done well since Adam Smith yet the domination of global markets by a single language is a new phenomenon.

For younger MFL learners the picture is not so different. There are, regrettably, few role models with an expertise in a language available to teenagers beyond a few footballers speaking Italian. How different might the picture be if Naomi Campbell and the glamorous models of the Paris catwalk were to communicate exclusively in French or German automobile engineers in German?

Politicians have been slow to follow the lead given by Tony Blair in speaking French in public. Only 17% of British politicians admit no expertise in a foreign language yet there is little or no evidence of them speaking in anything but their mother tongue to the press at televised news conferences at EU meetings. The media have never exploited the proliferation of French, Spanish (or South American), German and Dutch players in the Premier Football League for educational purposes. The proficiency in English of such players makes it sometimes easy to ignore the numbers that have arrived in recent years. Just a cursory look in 1999 at Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool and Chelsea produces Wiltord, Dacourt, Pires, Henri, Viera, Sylvestre, Barthez and Desai (French),

Hamman, Ziege and Babbel (German) and Nistelroy, Stam, Westerweld and Bergkamp (Dutch). These are figures revered by many secondary schoolchildren in the football mad UK yet this curiosity does not seem to extend to their language. It doesn't have to, one might infer, whilst their (the players') English is so good.

By contrast most politicians, officials and sportspersons from Germany and now from France and Spain are regularly filmed speaking in English. International agencies from NATO to Médecin sans Frontières have provided a rich and unending source of mainland Europeans speaking fluent English on prime-time TV. For some time British viewers have become accustomed to hearing politicians and others such as Wim Duisenberg (President of the European Bank) from Northern European countries communicating competently in English. Indeed, from the former West German chancellor Helmut Schmidt in the early 1970's onwards it seemed every German, Dutch and Scandinavian politician was bilingual. More recently, this group has been joined by politicians and public figures from the more southern European countries, such as the EU Trade Commissioner, M. Pascal Lamy and the former head of NATO, Snr. Solana who have joined others to issue sophisticated English sentence structures at press briefings. However, when European politicians, sportspersons and other celebrities respond in their own language it is consistently dubbed into English by the BBC and other networks after only a few words. In this respect, there has been little response to the recommendation of the Nuffield Languages Inquiry (2000, p 86.) "encouraging broadcasting organisations..... to play a key role in promoting languages".

The late Manfred Woerner, former head of NATO was noted for trying to persevere with the use of his mother tongue, German, at press conferences and briefings, despite a proficiency in English. He was later publicly forced to admit the difficulties this policy caused before the TV networks towards the end of his term of office and revert to English. In doing so he acknowledged that the impracticalities of speaking the language of over 72 million Europeans had become untenable when used alongside the global language of English. Ten years later English is almost universally understood in Germany and even the road signs of Austria are frequently in English.
Even the French have now reluctantly conceded the primacy of English and announcements such as that of the internationally renowned Pasteur Institute declaring it would henceforth publish journals only in English are no longer untypical. The magazine "Le Point" concluded recently that the French linguistic contribution ended

with "chauffeur" and that Mitterand's famous declaration of being at "war with the Anglo-Saxon" is mere history.

Belgium has two languages: French and Flemish. It is not unreasonable for the layman to assume that had French any realistic pretensions of competing with English and becoming a world language, Belgium would by now have one single language operating throughout the country. Instead, the status of Flemish has been acknowledged in statutes since the 1970s. A linguistic dichotomy flourishes in some parts of the country and the visitor is more likely to see billboards and adverts in English. The inquest into a recent railway accident reported the inability of operatives to use both official languages as a contributory factor.

The theorists Postman and Weingartner (1971) and Rogers (1969) argued that significant learning will only take place if the learner perceives personal relevance in the subject matter. Thomas and Harri Augstein (1977) wrote that,

> For education to be an enriching experience the meanings that emerge must be significant or important in some part of the person's life .....the viability of the personality meanings attributed to each depends upon how richly the individual incorporates them into his experience and tries them out in living. (p9)

The lesson learned from the media and often from their parents' generation by increasingly pragmatic teenagers and young adults is that MFL study is arduous and, whilst desirable, is not ultimately essential in an increasingly English-speaking world.

6.3 Aim 3: To consider comparisons with APU research of 1985 to indicate areas where student attitudes to MFL learning might have or might not have changed

Regretfully, the results of this survey also contrast sharply with the more optimistic results of the APU research. The results of *Ques3* produce a curve that portrays a significantly less enjoyable subject than that presented by APU in 1985. Despite the different populations, whatever general picture the APU applied research could be said to have represented in 1985, it is challenged by these local findings. It is further significant that the results in this study represent the views of the more successful 14-16 year old MFL learners. It is difficult to imagine similar compelling evidence showing a

deterioration in attitudes towards English or Maths. Equally, it would be ridiculous to suggest a similar reaction of 15 year-old pupils to Technology, the subject that enjoys equal, National Curriculum "core" status with Languages.

The pattern of a more positive student attitude in the APU data compared to that of this survey is repeated throughout the categories (*Speaking and speaking/reading, Reading, Writing and reading/writing and Learning*). They further underline, however, in a more general way the findings of chapter 5 and the relatively lower levels of perceived enjoyment (5.2.2), usefulness (5.2.8) and wish for contact with the T.L. community (5.2.10) and high levels of perceived difficulty (5.2.9) in MFL.
Perhaps the clearest way of demonstrating these conclusions is to finish by re-examining the findings of the APU that pertain to this study.

- More pupils considered MFL study useful, enjoyable and not difficult than pupils thinking the contrary;
- More wanted contact with the target language community than the contrary;

The wealth of evidence from chapter 5 and the conclusions already presented on usefulness, enjoyment and difficulty suggest this is now an erroneous view of MFL study in West Essex schools in 2001. The key question in response to all of these changes should now be: Is the National Curriculum a viable means of delivering MFL in all schools to pupils of all ages and abilities? More precisely one should ask: Is the PoS still appropriate for students of all abilities in KS4 given the overwhelming evidence of student dissatisfaction and systemic underachievement?

6.4 Aim 1: To record the responses of the more able Year 9 - 11 MFL students to Modern Foreign Languages using the National Curriculum Programmes of Study (PoS) in three West Essex 11-16 schools.

Research into the attitudes of teenage students is fraught with difficulties and this is acknowledged in the chapter on study design. The question of bias is everywhere and this section represents an attempt to identify aspects of the study that should be considered when judging the reliability of the design.

To begin with, it is important to restate the limitations of using the PoS as a form of data collection. *Ques1* is a method of conveniently cataloguing data that can also present typical student responses in schools and provides a quick and relatively simple method of testing student and teacher perceptions of MFL classroom activities. However, much depends on the format in which the PoS items are presented to the sample, in other words, the nature of the stimuli questions to which the students are asked to respond. In this study every effort was taken to ensure consistency in the delivery of the prompts and parity between the schools.

It must be assumed that such differences in responses between the schools might incidentally reveal observations about the nature of particular sets (prior learning, experiences in other aspects of the subject, teacher etc.) or other individual differences that are not always evident in other sets within the same school or other schools in the study.

This potential weakness is further evident in probability tests applied to the data from the sample. Chi-squared tests were used to test the level of discrepancy between the expected and observed frequencies of *Ques1* between the schools. In only 27% (mean) of the 174 measurements taken did the probability result in the statistically significant < 0.05. In most cases therefore it was impossible to establish a statistically significant correlation between recorded and expected frequencies of the variables. It must therefore be concluded that not all relationships between variables were valid and further supports the view presented in chapter 4, namely that *Ques1* should be considered qualitative data. Conclusions on the use of these methods continue in the next section.

6.5.1 Aim 4: To propose a model for MFL staff to:

- record their students' responses to MFL study
- check their own perceptions of student responses and indicate areas where staff may inaccurately gauge levels of student interest.

6.5.2 A satisfactory framework for measuring attitudes?

The introduction to this work recognised that the PoS constituted a mosaic of essential skills any student should experience in the acquisition of a language. Notwithstanding the methodological difficulties discussed in the last chapter and below it is proposed that the PoS can form a checklist for auditing pupil levels of motivation or disaffection in MFL. There are, it is proposed, few alternative methods of eliciting student views using a national framework that do not simply involve an arbitrary list of classroom tasks that may vary from teacher to teacher or prove so vague (or all-encompassing) to render the resulting measurements worthless. Using the PoS provides a template for measuring attitudinal responses to the National Curriculum.

6.5.3 Caveats

It is important at this stage to report the ways in which bias may have influenced the outcomes of this project.

Firstly, students generally relished the opportunity to reflect and to comment on the work. The "Hawthorne effect" acknowledges the temporary improvement in performance as a consequence of the teacher engaging with the student on the learning difficulties and issues experienced. This effect was recognised and reported to the researcher by some MFL staff during the data-gathering. The effect was most evident during the interviews but diminished by these occurring last in the three stages of data collection, thus minimising any such effect.

Ques1 is a method of grouping pupil responses within five easily identifiable categories. But, bias is often inherent in quantification and could be present in the comparisons of totals for the three PoS sections in *Ques1* between the three schools. Any conclusions must stress it is the horizontal analysis of the five responses within the category that preserves the relationship between the variables and reveals more about the relative distribution of constructs within the sample. It follows that any analysis of an individual score can only be valid if considered within the context of the other scores. Any vertical summing of data in rows on a chart to produce a theoretical "total" disturbs the view of that relationship and produces misleading conclusions.

The relativity of the terms used in this study needs to be explored more fully within the context of self-reporting techniques. I have already attempted to define the parameters of terms such as "views", "responses" and "feelings" in section 4.5. However, the relativity of terms such as "Like" or "Dislike" and "Positive" or "Negative" needs emphasis.

In the section on the data gathering process within the study design (chapter 4.7.) I outlined the reasons for choosing these categories in *Ques1*. It is important to note that any observations using these terms (e.g. the commentaries of 5.2.4-5.2.6) are required to maintain the integrity of a response in relation to the other responses. Respondents using an attitude scale such as that of *Ques1* choose what they feel is the most appropriate answer that best fits their ideal response. It may not necessarily accurately reflect their response or feelings, just more truthfully represent their view than the other alternatives on offer at that particular time. Indeed, it must be assumed that the researcher into attitudes would be uncommonly lucky to find a respondent's view adequately represented by the term "Like" or "Dislike". It should be more commonly assumed that the term does not therefore represent the entire picture. Teenagers' responses within such terms might be likened to the typical, everyday, human tendency to categorise a response temporarily in a cognitive "pending" tray until an opportunity arises with a better, more accurate definition of a view or feeling. To some extent, this was encountered in the interviews where students admitted an earlier view suggested by *Ques1* but acknowledged some change. To a large extent this is a consequence of trend studies that seek to accommodate changing opinions rather than design weakness.

A related concern is based on the understanding of the terms "Like" and "Enjoyment". Some more motivated or confident students' understanding of these seemed to be conditioned by a sense of progress. Evidence from the interviews saw such pupils ranking elements from the PoS higher than less motivated students and justifying their choice with reasons of whether the skill led to higher registers of language and consequently better marks. For example, when these students were asked to comment on activities such as "use language for real purposes" or "develop strategies for dealing with the unpredictable" typical observations were "It makes it more interesting" and "I don't find it enjoyable but I'd rather do it and learn". The items concerned were, in most cases, disliked by interviewees (with a mean rating of 1.86 in the 1-4 rankings). The more commonly met response to these is reflected in "I don't like getting it wrong", "I'm

happier just with what's in the book" and "wouldn't do it" or "I'd probably be wrong". Clearly, expressing a preference for one skill area for some pupils was influenced by a sense of confidence and the need for intellectual achievement.

Nuance may account for another form of bias. Conversations with 14-16 year-olds suggest that the word "Like" can also be interchanged by "Don't mind" in certain contexts and by some people. For example, pupils might say "I don't mind doing this", (answering the question, "How do you feel about using dictionaries in classwork?") meaning that they might not exclusively or always like an activity, merely quite like doing it or often like doing it. Frequently the positive verb "Like" was replaced with the negative "Don't mind" and when prompted interviewees did not appear to recognise any difference. To the adult MFL teacher/researcher "Don't mind" would more commonly evoke an element of complacent disinterest closer to a neutral or "Not sure" response. Accordingly, it may also be true that other boundaries between the categories are blurred for the linguistically less adept teenage student or for those more inclined to use more age related expressions in everyday speech. The researcher might expect to encounter argot ("sweet", adj.) or neologisms ("to large", vtr.) that have accompanied the spread of estuary English. There may be other synonyms for "dislike" or "not sure" that have remained undetected in the data. In this respect, it is important to recognise the inherent bias in the qualitative data examined by a middle-aged, male teacher researcher with some field experience research working with teenage students. Evidence of linguistically based method bias remains a concern of all attitudinal research using interviews and self-reporting.

Another linguistic problem arose in the pupils' understanding of skills as described to them from the Programmes of Study in the National Curriculum document. Whilst this was a natural starting point for the questions put to students it inevitably necessitated an unknown degree of interpretation by the researcher to facilitate pupil understanding. "Using language for real purposes" might be clear to a MFL teacher and colleagues between schools may also agree on its meaning, but explanations to a younger audience means finding concrete examples of abstract definitions and might cause a possible narrowing of the diversity inherent in the PoS.

A further difficulty was the breadth of the document itself. Clearly phrases such as "Communicate with each other, in pairs and with the teacher" (1a) comprise the skills of

listening, understanding and responding that also feature in section 2 *(listen attentively* (2a), *ask and answer questions* (2d), *ask for and give information and explanations* (2e) "initiate conversations" (2g).

A well-documented concern is acknowledged concerning the self-report techniques used in the questionnaires in so far as they allow respondents to give misleading replies. Questions invite the 'approval motive', or what's been called by Oller and Perkins (1978, p.28), "the self flattery tendency," in which subjects answer according to their own views "concerning what sort of traits and beliefs are desirable and what sorts are undesirable". To a certain extent, research into attitudes must also recognise peer group bias. A further pattern of bias, referred to as the "response set" describes respondents who may commit themselves to a view and feel obliged to be consistent even when this subsequently requires them to compromise their true feelings. (op.cit. 28-1). Asking many similar questions of the subset on different occasions is intended to eradicate this bias.

The comparisons with APU data also need consideration. In order to compare the results of the sample in this survey and those of APU it was necessary to:

- Limit and define the context and purpose of any comparison
- Contextualise any cross references

In defining the purpose of comparison it has already been stated in earlier chapters that the APU results can only be said to represent MFL learners' attitudes from the mid-1980s that might or might not reflect current student attitudes in West Essex. The findings of this survey contrasts with those of the APU. So the methodological purpose of any comparison of student attitudes can only be to indicate the degree to which local Year 9 and 10 students in 1998-2001 may differ in their attitudes to those that were prevalent nationally in 1985. APU conclusions never claimed to constitute a national benchmark in student attitudes. However they can be said to represent a nationally acknowledged collection of empirical measurements by which we might generally observe subsequent changes in pupil attitudes.

There is a final caveat to the assumption that attitudes can determine behaviour. Whilst the majority of research supports the view offered in this work it must be also recognised that some behaviourists refute a causal link between attitude and conduct.

There may indeed be a connection, but "attitude" is seen by some scientists as a product of social behaviour and not a determinant. Attitude functions not as an independent variable but a by-product of the process.

6.5.4 Teachers' Views

Part of this study aims to test Teachers' perceptions of what they think their students' views are. This was not designed primarily to highlight differences between staff in neighbouring schools-although this is unavoidable-but to furnish MFL departments with a model to examine assumptions made about students in a more systematic way.

Unsurprisingly, there was no conclusive pattern of agreement between the staff of different schools. It is not therefore possible to conclude that staff generally in these local schools tend to underestimate or overestimate the level of satisfaction or disaffection among their students in any particular areas of the PoS. There also appears to be no identifiable section of the PoS where staff might tend to over or underestimate student interest. Despite this the staff of School 2 and School 3 showed a greater similarity of choice compared with staff choices from School 1. This may reflect differences in pupils but, given the homogenous nature of the subset, it is more likely to highlight differences in the way staff perceive responses from their students and the PoS document.

It is interesting to examine the proportion of instances where staff have either correctly judged the views of their students or, indeed, over or underestimated. The precise measurements are detailed in section 5.2.10. It is somewhat disconcerting that two experienced Heads of Department consistently underestimated the level of interest/perceived enjoyment in around a third of the activities presented. This is a training issue, which the schools in the study may wish to consider, but it is suggested, could indicate a possible bias in the judgements of experienced MFL staff.

Finally, it is important to consider that the three main teacher/researchers engaged in this study were all experienced, UK trained practitioners with an average of 18.5 years teaching experience. The recent influx of foreign nationals to UK MFL classrooms may occasion a more pressing need to audit responses to the PoS in local schools.

CHAPTER 7. SOME PROPOSALS.

Chapter Six detailed the issues emerging from the findings of this survey. If these issues are to be addressed in the three sample secondary schools it is now appropriate to suggest ways in which the staff from the schools might begin to do this in the light of the findings.

7.1 Low levels of learner confidence and enjoyment in language learning.

Chambers (1993) famously remarked on the low levels of confidence evident in inner-city secondary school MFL students and how teachers needed to build learner confidence if all students are to make progress. The findings from Leeds among pupils of all abilities are confirmed here among more able students. There is an abundance of evidence for this in the report including the ominous finding that low levels of confidence in speaking work leading to disaffection in MFL may begin earlier than Year 9 for some able students resulting in low levels of motivation in KS4. So, how can staff begin to build confidence in languages?

To begin with staff must accept the often hard-nosed, pragmatic decisions teenagers make. Students who feel pressurised by the requirements of the subject-such as the need to respond orally in front of peers-will often make judgements about the subject that will determine their level of involvement. Gardner and Lambert (1972) established that students learn for two reasons. Either they learn because they find the learning useful or enjoyable. If the subject is perhaps less useful for some pupils, then staff can do much to make the subject(s) fun.

There are perhaps many ways to achieve this and each school will plan differently, but the schools in this study should reassess, as a matter of some urgency, the role of language games. All popular quiz shows such as "The Weakest Link" should be unashamedly mimicked and used to reinforce learning. This and other activities may not only promote a sense of fun in learning but also offer a degree of independence and a randomness that ensures any student can win or succeed. Classes should enjoy a regular games slot recognised by the scheme of work. There is every reason to accept the primacy of confidence building as acceptable outcomes to a lesson and that this might be as important in some schools as progression through the NC levels. It would seem

logical to promote in the three schools a sense of learning for fun in MFL as well as the notion of learning for purpose enshrined in the PoS.

What makes speaking a language "cool"? Different teachers will have different ideas and these will constantly change but the findings of the interviews suggest humour and music may offer rich possibilities and are lacking in MFL lessons. Respondents reported that songs and sketches may still be acceptable fare for older MFL students provided it's funny. Too often, students commented, songs, poems etc. were more likely to be tedious and patronising. Teachers should accept that their favourite rhyme or song that perfectly demonstrates the vocabulary of the family or simply the song in the course textbook may indeed be patronising or boring and begin to consider alternative songs to present to classes that are clearly humorous or attractive rhythmically. Chanting games that make use of song lyrics are often perceived to be entertaining by youngsters enthusiastic about rap music and beat. Provided it is done in an entertaining way song lyrics can often be changed for essential phrases on, for example, way finding.

If students incline to work that is interesting or funny teachers should make a conscious effort to develop humorous anecdotes and seek out amusing material. Surreal or bizarre descriptions of locations (e.g. rooms in the house) are infinitely more appealing than factual ones. It is surprising how much students can follow the TL when it involves a particularly unflattering description of the headteacher or alleged personal details of senior staff of senior staff. Jokes are also a particularly fruitful source of stimuli as they combine the visual with the verbal and, reproduced as an OHT, can be used for comprehension work with dictionaries as well as a springboard for short passages of creative writing.

The evidence from *Ques1* likewise suggests that role-plays and techniques identified with KS3 such as choral repetition are welcomed in KS4 if they can boost confidence. Indeed there is an abundance of evidence supporting the popularity of pairwork speaking tasks. Teachers must exploit the natural tendency of teenagers to support others' learning. All classes in years 10 and 11 should regularly enjoy role-play opportunities and assess each other and repeat phrases as part of a larger group to bridge the confidence gap between listening and speaking. It is all too convenient to assume such students are beyond such mechanistic exercises when they in fact welcome the opportunity to enunciate new words and phrases. This can take place in smaller groups

with the assistant. The most damaging evidence (to MFL learning progress) described in previous chapters notes how MFL teachers offer opportunities typically from the front of the classroom for pupils to listen to and acquire the FL from a variety of stimuli. In all three schools the evidence suggests these offers delivered in the target language are often rejected and the teaching becomes ineffectual for all but the most motivated. Recognising this and accepting that whole class TL teaching is part of the problem offers a way forward out of the impasse evident in these schools.

Surveys, self-supported learning projects and investigations also have a role to play in building confidence through independent learning. Teachers in the schools in this study should be encouraged to plan simulations such as setting up the French market in the drama studio. Teachers need to accept that many students may not speak and indeed probably exploit such situations but that such activities could possibly fuel a greater tolerance towards the subject and increase levels of confidence. Students from all three schools reported few opportunities for ICT work in MFL. Most schools now offer internet facilities and the possibility for students to research independently study topics.

Introducing independent learning with its emphasis on micro-teaching provides the student with the possibility of building confidence and a sense of enjoyment by speaking the language in small groups with the teacher. Suddenly, with 4-6 pupils seated around the teacher's desk, introducing, practising and extending structures and lexis becomes more feasible. Equally, the ability to remain unresponsive is not an option in small groups and circumstances foster the provision of accurate performance data and feedback for the teacher to enable the setting of more appropriate learning targets for the pupils. Whilst the remainder of the class are engaged in practising the structures introduced orally or in writing, the teacher can even raise the intellectual tone or level of work among selected parties of students.

Projects could be based on typical KS3 themes such as "My Town" or "Healthy Living" and offer a better balance between the teacher-delivered and managed tuition and independent learning that is successfully exploited elsewhere in the curriculum from science to Humanities and Art.

This example of good practise is not new and probably already exists a few doors away from language classrooms in the Humanities department. It is also prevalent in most

Primary Schools. These methods have however been forgotten or sidelined by many MFL teachers since the introduction of the National Curriculum and the subsequent emphasis on progression and school performance.

Older, more able students, it was reported in the findings, do not like the prospect of getting things wrong. Opportunities should be offered for pupils to check the details (such as genders) of the language encountered or produced. For this purpose all MFL classroom should have a readily available tray of bi-lingual dictionaries.

All KS4 MFL students should have access to glossy foreign publications such as "Paris Match" and "Stern" or the web-page equivalents. The APU research suggested that texts of considerable linguistic complexity can be accessible to pupils in reading materials and this is still true today.

> Introducing magazines and story books on a wider scale would give pupils tasks which were demanding and worthwhile, and would be an activity welcomed by at least a considerable number of learners. (Boyce and Portal, 1987, p.28).

Selecting texts for their own interest should therefore be the guiding principle in this provision as it is believed "texts which are adapted to pupils' supposed level of competence run the risk of underestimating the degree of understanding of which many of them are capable" (op. cit. p.25). The indications of *Ques1* and the interviews give some hopeful signs of interest among pupils. Teachers' reasoning should be that, in this instance, the accurate fulfilment of tasks should give way to pupils' interests " ...according to the principle that partial as well as detailed understanding is a valuable achievement on which future learning can be built". (op. cit. p.24).

The provision of a comprehensive reading scheme that includes subscriptions to foreign magazines should be a priority and feature in the departmental development plan. The reading scheme should also incorporate multiple copies of teenage magazines and students should be taught to use dictionaries in year 7.

The unpopularity of writing anything other than copying vocabulary remains a problem in years 9-10 and in the three schools may be part of the evident literacy problem. Ways should be sought to provide stimulating material and tasks to encourage writing

such as the use of images and text-frames. Certainly the APU conclusions indicated that:

> Writing activities are seen to be enjoyable and clearly focused, and pupils are made to feel that they have achieved something positive, however small, then writing has a valuable role to play in the development of foreign language proficiency in the young learner. (Lee, 1987).

The advent of coursework options at GCSE has largely solved the reluctance of older GCSE pupils to write. As levels of instrumental motivation among more able pupils rise in KS4 (mainly though not exclusively in year 11) so students come to realise the positive way in which coursework marks can improve final grades. The same can work with younger students. There should be a "project" or teacher assessed coursework element built into KS3 SATs even though the results are not externally moderated. This can be achieved simply by schools taking the initiative.

7.2 The reluctance to speak the TL in front of peers

There is little teachers can do to eradicate embarrassment from the classroom when dealing with sensitive adolescents. Oral work presents particular difficulties that are often impossible to avoid. Staff can however make greater use of techniques that do not expose learners to peer group scrutiny. Some of these have been discussed in the previous section. Choral repetition in whole or small group activities can build confidence. Using YES/NO and CORRECT/FALSE response cards glued into pages of exercise books can foster comprehension with the teacher without individual embarrassment and can act as a prompt to speaking. Appointing students as surrogate teachers in small group work or classroom simulations may well compromise accuracy in oral work but removes at a stroke the power differential referred to earlier and encourages students to speak. Small group work with young foreign nationals provides young students with the best incentives to speak. 15-16 year-olds are generally curious about 18-20 year olds.

The current practice in which adults are employed as FLAs should be reviewed. Improved levels of Assistant provision should be available to all schools. This could be achieved under the auspices of the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges

(CBEVE), which co-ordinates the supply of foreign university students wishing to teach in UK schools. At one time this practice was widespread in West Essex.

> Review and reinvigorate the reciprocal Foreign Language Assistant scheme, which enables schools to appoint higher education students from other countries as living exponents of their language. (Nuffield Languages Inquiry, 2000, recommendation 7.9)

7.3 The unpopularity of the explicit teaching of grammar

The Nuffield Languages Inquiry final report (2000) bemoans that MFL courses provide a poor foundation for future learning and shows that this is not just a feature of local schools.

> Too many pupils-including those achieving high grades-emerge from secondary education with limited practical competence, low levels of confidence and negative attitudes towards language-learning. Many have a poor understanding of grammar, which makes future language-learning difficult, and limits their ability to use language flexibly. (p.45)

Dick Hudson (Dept. of Phonetics and Linguistics, UCL) comments in the above report that "the phrase-book level of most GCSE language teaching won't do," and makes a contrast between the pupil who understands how verbs etc. work and the pupil that doesn't. Clearly the best placed pupil to learn another language in later life for commercial reasons is the former.

There have been many dramatic changes of view on the role of grammar in MFL teaching in the last twenty years. At present there is at last a frank acknowledgement of the importance of grammar despite it unpopularity with MFL learners. This is a healthier situation for teachers and learners. The National Curriculum for English and the Government's Literacy Hour now promotes this kind of grammatical competence in students and this must lead to more curricular links between English and MFL departments in secondary schools. Departments could for example spend a fruitful hour on a training day agreeing to use the same grammatical terms, (e.g. determiners/articles,

descriptives/adjectives, adverbs/time phrases). Thankfully there has also been an explosion in the number of courses available to teachers on promoting more dynamic ways of teaching grammar.

The conclusions of this report must however regrettably report that there are more pressing concerns in MFL learning than a lack of grammatical awareness such as the more general unpopularity of all things linguistic. To this end the lack of grammatical awareness must remain in the schools in the study a symptom of greater and more general difficulties.

7.4 The lack of ICT provision in MFL learning

Evidence from this study shows that students access to ICT in the three schools is at best patchy. There is a clear need for all MFL classrooms to have internet access but also that MFL staff should make more effective use of existing networks within schools.

E-mail networks, use of computer programmes on CD-ROM (that promote a level of virtual authenticity unrivalled by the best efforts in the classroom), topics with multiple-choice self-assessment, net-surfing lessons that provide opportunities for reading for pleasure and without immediate need for assessment which might be optional all support the learning of languages and promote enjoyment. Teachers should set self-researched topics using the internet for homework.

7.5 Raising the profile and importance of Europe in the eyes of students. The perceived lack of importance of a language in career options

Schools and the LEA are the institutions best able to tackle this problem. The three schools can do little to enlist the support of parents in MFL teaching-beyond asking for parental support of school policies. This survey reports that parents are unlikely to have anything more than a rudimentary knowledge of a language and often feel they are not in a position to help. ("Parents are as likely to help their children with MFL homework as not" *Definition of sample (2).* 5.2.1). There are also only small numbers of parents willing to invest the resources (time, space, disruption, finance) required by MFL exchanges. It is impossible to ignore the small but vociferous elements among parents from all three schools that are antagonistic towards the aims of MFL teaching.

To remedy this calls for significant curriculum reform. Examination boards should be encouraged to accept the importance of assessed modules examining the culture and traditions of the country whose language is being studied. Students of all ages could take a balance of linguistic and cultural modules for GCSE and be permitted to complete self-researched and comparative projects on, for example, the tourist attractions of Brittany or alpine areas of Austria, the attractions of Paris or Berlin. "Landeskunde" projects that taught elements of language as well as showing the way of life of groups of people may reduce the high levels of ignorance that exist among local teenagers about other EC countries. The five years of KS3 and 4 should surely be able to accommodate the extra time required for this. This is not a new or radical idea. European schools have been doing this for decades. It is not uncommon to find the history of native Americans on the syllabus in German English classes.

This study has found no evidence of ethnocentricity among the sample and plenty of evidence that teenagers know little of, but can be curious about their European counterparts as people. There is a moral imperative to address this weakness if schools are to produce young people who are better able to work with and understand their European neighbours. In the short-term there is also plenty the MFL teachers can do to broaden pupils' awareness of the applications of language learning.

> Learning a language is vital for .. the insights it provides into the languages and cultures.... I want to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to have a language as this will be one of the skills needed for the new millennium. David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education. (NLI, 2000, p.15)

Local schools were inundated with materials and curricular ideas in 1990-1991 to publicise the UK's full membership of the EC. Over ten years later little detectable remains of this early optimism. Indeed schools have been subjected in the intervening years to a well-recognised "initiative overload". The drive to raise standards has necessitated little time or resources being made available for preparing the school curriculum for closer European ties. Where funding has been made available to build curricular links with European schools this is often difficult to co-ordinate and determined more by the management capabilities of schools and the policies of agencies rather than clear educational need.

The final report of the Nuffield Inquiry details the lack of a comprehensive, co-ordinated national plan for Languages headed by a "Languages Supremo" that could begin to address these issues nationally. Many of the problems listed above would be addressed by this strategy, (See NLI Recommendations pp. 84-98.) and could be achieved by:

- Introducing elements of European awareness into schools' PSE programme.
- Funding schemes from local town halls to form curricular links and un-reciprocal study visits to French, German and Spanish speaking countries.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

References

Ajzen, I. & Fischbein, M, (1980) *Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behaviour.* Eaglewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice Hall.

Ajzen, I. (1988) *Attitudes, Personality and Behavior.* Milton Keynes: Open Univ. Press

Alison, J. (1993) *Not bothered? Motivating Reluctant Learners* in Key Stage Four. London. CILT

Allport, G.W. (1955) *Becoming.* New Haven. Yale Univ. Press.

Anderson (1988). Fundamentals of Educational Research. London. Falmer Press Teachers' Library.

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Learning about Learning from Action Research (1959) *National Education Association of the U.S. Washington D.C.*

Barton, A. (1997) Boy's Under-achievement in GCSE Modern Languages: Reviewing the Reasons. *Language Learning Journal* 16, 11-16.

Best, J.W. (1970) *Research in Education.* Eaglewood Cliffs. N.J. Prentice Hll.

Blatchford, P. (1992) Children's attitudes to work at 11 years. *Educational Studies* 18(1), 107-17

Boring, E.G. (1953) *The Role of Theory on Experimental Psychology.* American Journal of Psychology, 66.

Boyce & Portal, M (1987) *Foreign Languages - Listening and Reading Implications of the APU surveys for reading and learning* NFER - Nelson

Bryson, Bill (1991) *Mother Tongue.* London. Penguin Books. First pub. 1990, USA, William Morrow.

Burstall, C. (1975) French in the Primary School: The British Experiment. *Canadian Modern Languages Review* 31, 388-402

Burstall, C. Cohen, S. Hargreaves, M. and Jamieson, M. (1974) *Primary French in the Balance.* Windsor, NFER.

Callaghan, M. (1998). An investigation into the causes of boys' under achievement in French. *Language Learning Journal* 17, 2-7.

Carr, W. and Kemmis, S. (1986) *Becoming critical: Education, knowledge and Active Res*earch London. The Falconer Press

Chambers, G. (1993) Taking the "de" out of demotivation. *Language Learning Journal* 7, 13-16.

Chambers, G. (1994) A snapshot in motivation at 10+, 13+ and 16+. *Language Learning Journal* 9, 14-18.

Clark, A. and Trafford, J. (1995) Boys into modern languages: An investigation of the discrepancy in attitudes between boys and girls in modern languages. *Gender and education* 7 (3), 315-325.

Clark, A. and Trafford, J. (1996) *Return to gender: boys' and girls' attitudes and achievements*. Language Learning Journal 14, 40-9.

Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (1980 & reprinted 1998) *Research Methods in Education.* London & New York, Routledge.

Denzin, (1988). *The Research Act: a theoretical introduction to sociological methods.* Eaglewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice Hall.

DES/WO (1983) Foreign Languages in the School Curriculum. A Consultative Paper. London: HMSO

DES/DENI/WO (1985*) Foreign Language Performance in Schools: A Report on the 1984 Survey of French*. London: HMSO, APU.

DES/DENI/WO (1986) *Foreign Language Performance in Schools: A Report on the 1983 Survey of French, German & Spanish*. London: HMSO, APU.

DES / WO (1991) *Modern Languages in the National Curriculum*. London. HMSO.

DES / WO (1995) *Modern Languages in the National Curriculum*. London. HMSO.

DfES "14-19 Green Paper", Spring (2002) *Extending opportunities and improving performance*. London. HMSO.

Dörnyei (1988). *Motivational Variables in MFL.* Language Learning Vol 40. No. 1

Cosway, P. (1994 & 1998) Reg. Inspector T1156 *Ofsted Report*

Ebutt D. (1983) *Education Action Research : some general concerns and specific quibbles* Cambridge Institute of Education

Elms, A.C. (1976) *Attitudes* Open University Press

Filmer-Sankey, C. (1989) *A Study of First-Year Pupils' Attitudes Towards French, German and Spanish*. OXPROD, University of Oxford Dept. of Educational Studies.

Filmer-Sankey, C. (1991) *A Study of Second-Year Pupils' Attitudes Towards French, German and Spanish*. Oxford: OXPROD, University of Oxford Dept. of Educational Studies.

Fischbein, M & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Theory Research*. London. Longman Higher Education.

Footitt, Hilary. Chairperson of the University Council for ML (UCML) and member of the UK organising group for the *European Day of Languages* 26.09.01 and speaking on Radio 4, *Excess Baggage* presented by Arthur Smith, broadcast 29.09.01

Gardner, R. and Lambert, W. (1959). Motivational variables in second language Acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology 13.*

Gardner, R. (1966). Motivational variables in second language. *International Journal of American Linguistics.* 32, 24-44

Gardner, R. (1985) *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning.* London: Arnold.

Gardner, R. and Lambert, W. (1972). *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning.* Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Healey, J. (1999) *Statistics-a Tool for Social Research* Wadsworth

Hinton, P. (1995) *Statistics Explained - A guide for social science students*, London Routledge

Hopkins, D. (1985) *A Teachers' Guide to Classroom Research* Buckingham, Oxford University Press

Kelly, G.A. (1955). *The Personality of Personal Constructs.* Vols 1 & 2. New York. W. Norton & Co. Inc.

Kelly, G.A. (1970). *A Brief Introduction to Personal Construct Theory.* D. Bannister (Ed). London & N. York Academic Press.

Kemmis et al (1981) *The Action Research Planner.* Geelong Australia Deakin University Press

Lambert, Wallace, Gardner, Barik and Tunstall, (1962). *Attitudinal and cognitive aspects of intensive study of a second language.* Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 66

Lee, B. (1987) *Foreign Language Writing Implications of the APU surveys for teaching and learning.* NFER -Nelson

Lemon, N. (1973) *Attitudes and their Measurement* Batsford, London

McDevitt, B. (1997) Learner Autonomy and the need for learner training. *Language Learning Journal* 16, 34-9.

Milton, J. and Meara, P. (1998) Are the British really bad at learning foreign languages? *Language Learning Journal* 18, 68-76.

National Curriculum Council (1992) *Modern Foreign Languages Non-Statuory Guidance.* York. NCC.

Ofsted (1995) *Modern Foreign Languages. A Review of Inspection Findings 1993-4.* London. HMSO.

Oller & Perkins, (1978) *Intelligence and Language Proficiency as sources of variance in self-reported affective variables.* Language Learning 28, 85-97.

O'Keefe, D. and Stoll, P. (1993) *Truancy in English Secondary Schools*. London. DES. HMSO.

O'Leary, J. (1998) *British students build a new language barrier*. The Times, 3.1.98

Powney, J. & Watts, M. (1987). *Interviewing in Educational Research.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Robson, C. (1993). *Real world Research.* Oxford: Blackwells.

Philips, D. and Clark, G. (1988) *Attitudes towards Diversification*. Oxford: OXPROD. University of Oxford Dept. of Educational Studies

Place, J. (1997) *"Boys will be boys"-boys and underachievement in MFL*. Language Learning Journal 16, 3-10.

Pope, M. & Keen, T. (1987). *Personal Construct Psychology and Education*. London. Academic Press.

Reisener, H. (1992) *Motivierungstechniken im Fremdsprachenunterricht*. Ismaning: Max-Hueber Verlag.

Savignon (1972) *Communicative Competence: an experiment in FLT.* Martial, Marcel Didier

Schiefele, H. (1974) *Lernmotivation und Motivlernen*. Munich: Franz Erhrenwirth Verlag KG.

Stables, A and Wikeley, F. (1997). *Changes in preference for and relative importance of subjects during a period of educational reform*. Educational Studies. Vol 23 (3).

Stables, A and Wikeley, F. (1999) From bad to worse? Pupils' attitudes to MFL at ages of 14 & 15. *Language Learning Journal* 20.

Stern, H.H. (1983) *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. OUP P.375

Stradling, R., Saunders, L. and Weston, P. (1991) *Differentiation in Action: A Whole School Approach for Raising Achievement.* London: NFER & DES.

Swarbrick, A. (ed) (1994) *Teaching Modern Languages*. London: Routledge.

Weiner, B. (1972) *Theories of Motivation*. Chicago: Rand McNally College Pub. Co.

APPENDICES

National Curriculum Part 1-Programmes of Study (PoS) 1998

MFL IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM. PART 1: LEARNING AND USING THE TARGET LANGUAGE Sections 1-3

1. Communicating in the target language Pupils should be given opportunities to:

a communicate with each other in pairs and groups, and with their teacher;
b use language for real purposes, as well as to practise skills;
c develop their understanding and skills through a range of language activities, *eg games, role-play, surveys and other investigations;*
d take part in imaginative and creative activities, *e.g. improvised drama;*
e use everyday classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech;
f discuss their own ideas, interests and experiences and compare them with those of others;
G listen, read or view for personal interest and enjoyment, as well as for information;
h listen and respond to different types of spoken language;
i read handwritten and printed texts of different types and of varying lengths and, where appropriate, read aloud;
j produce a variety of types of writing
k use a range of resources for communicating, *eg telephone, electronic mail, fax, letters.*

2. Language skills Pupils should be taught to:

a listen attentively, and listen for gist and detail;
b follow instructions and directions;
c ask about meanings, seek clarification or repetition;
d ask and answer questions, and give instructions;
e ask for and give information and explanations;
f imitate pronunciation and intonation patterns;
g initiate and develop conversations;
h express agreement, disagreement, personal feeling and opinions;
i describe and discuss present, past and future events;
j skim and scan texts, including databases where appropriate, for information;
k copy words, phrases and sentences;
l make notes from what they hear or read;
m summarise and report the main points of spoken or written texts;
n redraft their writing to improve its accuracy and presentation, *eg by word-processing;*
0 Vary language to suit context, audience and purpose

3. Language-learning skills and knowledge of language Pupils should be taught to:

a learn by heart phrases and short extracts, *eg rhymes, poems, songs, jokes, tongue twisters;*
b acquire strategies for committing familiar language to memory;
c develop their independence in language learning use;
d use dictionaries and reference materials;
e use context and other clues to interpret meaning;
f understand and apply patterns, rules exceptions in language forms and structures;
g use their knowledge to experiment with language;
h Understand and use formal language;
i Develop strategies for dealing with the unpredictable.

Data Gathering Formats:
Questionnaires 1 Pupil & Staff Response Formats

Questionnaire 1

PUPILS' RESPONSES TO NAT. CURRIC. PART 1 SECT. 1						
	LIKE A LOT	LIKE	NOT SURE	DISLIKE	DISLIKE A LOT	
A						
B						
C						
D						
E						
F						
G						
H						
I						
J						
K						

SECT 2 LANGUAGE SKILLS. YR 9/10						
	LIKE A LOT	LIKE	NOT SURE	DISLIKE	DISLIKE A LOT	
A						
B						
C						
D						
E						
F						
G						
H						
I						
J						
K						
L						
M						
N						

SECT 3 LANGUAGE LEARNING SKILLS / KNOWLEDGE OF LANG. YR 9/10						
	LIKE A LOT	LIKE	NOT SURE	DISLIKE	DISLIKE A LOT	
A						
B						
C						
D						
E						
F						
G						

Questionnaire 2 (Reduced from font size 14)

YEAR 10 QUESTIONNAIRE

SCHOOL..... CLASS ..... . DATE ..../. ./ BOY / GIRL

1. Has secondary school been as good *I* not so good as you expected it would be?

Indicate on the scale how you feel:

Better than expected *What I had expected* *Not so good as expected*

1 2 3 4

2. **Have the subjects been as good *I* not so good as you expected they would be?**
Indicate how you feel by using this scale:

Better than expected *What I had expected* *Not so good as expected*
1 2 3 4

Subject	***Better than expected***	***What I had expected***		***Not so good as expected***
Maths	1	2	3	4
English	1	2	3	4
MFL (French / German)	1	2	3	4
Geography	1	2	3	4
History	1	2	3	4
RE	1	2	3	4
Science	1	2	3	4
PE/Sport	1	2	3	4
Technology	1	2	3	4
Art	1	2	3	4

Add any other reasons you want to:

....

.....

3. **What do you enjoy *most* about coming to school?**

4. **What do you enjoy *least* about coming to school?**

5. **Think about all your subjects. Which two do you regard as the *most useful?***

....

6. **Which two subjects do you regard as the *least useful?***

....

7. **Now list these typical subjects <u>in order of importance</u>.**
(Place a number in the box below that subject)

Maths	Eng	Science	Hums	Tech	MFL	Sport	Art	Drama

8. **Please put a circle somewhere along the scale below to indicate how much you like German or French compared to all your other subjects:**

MFL is my most preferred subject *MFL is my least preferred subject*

1 2 3 4

9. **Please place a tick in the boxes to show your reasons for learning German / French:**

"I am learning German / French because ..... ".

	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
(a) *I think it will help me to get a better job.*			
(b) *I am interested in German / French people and their way of life.*			
(c) *It will allow me to meet and talk with more people in Europe.*			
(d) *An educated person should be able to speak a foreign language.*			
	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
(e) *I enjoy it.*			
(f) *I'm forced to do it*			
(g) (other reasons)			

10. Have you ever truanted because of your German / French lesson? (Please circle your answer)

YES *NO*

11. Please tick the statement that best fits you:

❑ I try very hard in German / French lessons

❑ I try quite hard in German / French lessons

❑ I don't really try at all in German / French lessons

12. What does your teacher think?

❑ S/he thinks I try very hard in German / French lessons

❑ S/he thinks I try quite hard in German / French lessons

❑ S/he thinks I don't really try at all in German / French lessons

❑ I don't know what s/he thinks

13. Please tick the statement that best applies to you:

❑ I am making excellent progress in German / French

❑ I am doing well in German / French

❑ I am making satisfactory progress in German / French

❑ I am making poor progress in German / French

14. What does your teacher think?

❑ S/he thinks I am making excellent progress in German / French

❑ S/he thinks I am doing well in German / French

❑ S/he thinks I am making satisfactory progress in German / French

❑ S/he thinks I am making poor progress in German / French

❑ I don't know what s/he thinks

15. Tick all the statements that apply to you:

❑ I want to take German / French at college (16-18)

❑ I want to speak German / French well enough to get a job abroad

❑ I am working towards a good GCSE grade

❑ I want to give it up the first chance I can get

❑ I haven't really thought about it

❑ I don't care about German / French because I am no good at it

16. **How do you feel when your teacher speaks to the class in German / French?**
(Tick any of the following that apply:)

❑ It is interesting and it makes you concentrate

❑ You learn more

❑ It can be difficult but I try to answer when I can

❑ It puts me off because I can't always understand

17. **How do you feel when your teacher asks you to speak in German / French?**
(Tick any of the following that apply:)

❑ It is interesting and it makes you concentrate

❑ You learn more

❑ It can be difficult but I try when I can

❑ It puts me off

18. If I had the opportunity to change the amount of German / French that is taught in our school, I would .....

❑ increase the number of lessons
❑ keep the number of lessons as it is
❑ decrease the number of lessons

19. I believe a language should be:

❑ taught to all pupils
❑ taught only to those pupils who wish to learn it
❑ taught only to the end of year 9
❑ dropped altogether from school

20. Have you ever been to a foreign country?

Which one/s? .....

21. Choose one of the foreign countries you have visited.
Now complete the following sentence by saying what the people were like there:

The people in ..... were .....

22. What did you like most about the country you visited?

23. What did you like least about the country you visited?

24. Which other country would you like to visit? .....

Why? .....

25. If the language of that country was not English, would you try to learn it before you went?

YES *NO*

26. Would you consider trying to get a job in a foreign country when you leave school?

YES *NO*

27. Here are some words used to describe people from other countries:

polite - pleasant - friendly - interesting - fashionable - clever - rich - ambitious - pushy - unpleasant - loud - unfriendly - impolite - ignorant

Now complete the following sentences by using these words.
(You can use your own words if you want to).

I think German people are .....

because ..... .

I think French people are .....

because ..... .

I think British people are .....

because .....

28. After GCSE, I will probably .....

- ☐ try to use my German / French as much as possible
- ☐ try to use my German / French a little
- ☐ try to forget what I've learnt

29. How often have you come across a situation where it would have been useful to be able to speak German / French?

(Please tick one). ☐ *occasionally* ☐ *rarely* ☐ *never*

30. How much German / French do your parents know?

(Circle a number on the scale to indicate what you think)

Lots		*Some*		*None*
1	2		3	4

31. How much do your parents encourage you to learn German / French?

Very much		*A little*		*Not at all*
1	2		3	4

32. Have you ever had the opportunity to hear German / French outside school? (circle your answer)

YES *NO*

33. Do you know any people who speak German / French as their mother tongue?

YES *NO*

34. Has your opinion of German / French changed since year seven?

YES *NO*

35. If so, how?

36. Please add anything you feel is important, which I have left out.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Questionnaire 3 (reduced from font size 14 and landscape format)

QUES 3 **Respond to the following questions by placing a tick in the box, which best describes what you think.** School ..... Date .....

E.g. if you think it is absolutely true that French / German is one of your favourite lessons tick the "Strongly agree" box, if is probably or partly true tick the "agree" box. If, however, the statement is probably or partly false tick the "disagree", if you think it is absolutely false tick the "strongly disagree". If you are in doubt then tick the "neutral". Use the key below to remind yourself.

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Absolutely true	*Probably or partly true*	*In doubt*	*Partly or probably false*	*Absolutely false*
1. French / German is one of my favourite lessons				
2. There are many more important things to learn in school than French / German				
3. I would like to go to France / Germany				
4. I think my parents are pleased I'm learning French / German				
5. I don't want to do any more French / German after this year				
6. I think I try quite hard in French / German				
7. French / German is one of the easiest lessons				
8. I would like to stay with a French / German family.				
9. I find French / German more difficult than other subjects				
10. I don't like French / German because I'm no good at it.				
11. French / German will be useful to me after I leave school.				
12. Learning French / German is a waste of time.				
13. I would like to be able to speak several foreign languages				
14. I'd like to get a job where I could use my French / German.				
15. I am not interested in learning foreign languages.				
16. I am better at French / German than at other subjects				
17. I am not interested in going to France / Germany				
18. I like French / German most of the time				
19. I think it's a good idea to have a French / German penfriend				

20. French / German is too difficult to understand.				
21. I like learning new words				
22. My teacher thinks I don't try very hard in French / German				
23. It puts me off when the teacher speaks to me in French / German				
24. French / German is easy if you try				

25. I would like to have a French / German boy or girl to stay.				
26. I find it hard to remember the words in French / German				
27. I don't need French / German for what I want to do.				
28. I enjoy French / German because it seems easy.				
29. I am not interested in learning about other countries				
30. I'm no good at French / German.				
31. I enjoy other lessons more than French / German				
32. I would like to meet some French / German people.				
33. French / German is usually boring.				
34. I'm quite good at French / German				
35. French / German is no use to me as I don't want to go to France / Germany.				
36. I think it would feel strange staying with a French / German family.				

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Structured Interviews Format

Here are some activities that students think are popular and enjoyable and others that are less so. How would you rate them using the following scale of 1-4?
(Show the interviewee the following chart and explain idea of a continuum).

1 *(Dislike)*	2 *(unsure)*	3 *(like)*	4

1. Rate the following 1- 4. Why do you like / dislike the activity described?

Section 1

Descriptor	PoS	Focus	Rating	Reason(s)
Communicate in pairs & with the teacher, develop their understanding and skills through a range of language activities, *eg games, role-play, surveys and other investigations;* Use everyday classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech; initiate and develop conversations;	1a & 1c 1e 2g	Using TL in pairwork. Confidence building opportunities. Controlling pace of work spontaneity		
Ask about meanings, seek clarification or repetition; Use language for real purposes Develop strategies for dealing with the unpredictable	2c 1b 3i	Using TL in class speaking work with Teacher/FLA in front of peers/adults. Age of FLA		
discuss their own ideas, interests and experiences and compare them with those of others; express agreement, disagreement, personal feeling and opinions	f 2h	growing independence, exercising control in learning process		
read or view for personal interest and enjoyment, as well as for information;	g	Controlling pace of learning, reading without recording answers		
listen and respond to different types of spoken language;	h	Fast pace of listening material represents challenge/ achievement		
produce a variety of types	j	Preferred types		Lists, short notes

of writing summarise and report the main points of spoken or written texts	 2m	of writing. Preference for simple and mundane as confidence building.		longer messages (letters, descriptions), accounts/narratives
use a range of resources for communicating, *eg telephone, electronic mail, fax, letters.*	k	New technology		

Section 2

understand and apply patterns, rules exceptions in language forms and structures; Understand and use formal and informal language; describe and discuss present, past and future events;	3f 3h 2i	Using grammar and applying to different contexts. Challenge and attributes of past failure rates		
skim and scan texts, including databases where appropriate, for information;	j	Pace of learning, reading without recording answers		
copy words, phrases and sentences; redraft their writing to improve its accuracy and presentation, *e.g. by word-processing*	k, n	Preferred types of writing. New technology. See 1j above.		

Section 3

learn by heart phrases and short extracts, *e.g. rhymes, poems, songs, jokes, tongue twisters;*	a	KS3 methods in KS4		
use dictionaries and reference materials;	d	Accuracy. Pace of learning		
use context and other clues to interpret meaning; use their knowledge to experiment with language.	e g	Speculating, taking risks		

2. What are your opinions of France and the French / Germany and the Germans?

Negative unsure / neutral positive

(an unsure/neutral vote might indicate a lack of contact and a lack of integrative motivation see Ques2)

3. Where would MFL be in a ranking of your subjects from your favourite (1) to your least favourite (8)?

4. **Do you really enjoy MFL? Enough to consider studying MFL 16-18?** *(only 10% would admit to really enjoying MFL-Chambers, is this true in upper sets?)*

1 absolutely 2 probably 3 unsure 4 probably not 5 absolutely not

5. How useful are your subjects? Where would MFL be in a ranking of your subjects from the most useful (1) to the least useful (8)?

6. Has you attitude to MFL changed since Year Nine?
Better? Unsure? or Worse?

7. Which is more important in your opinion (a) enjoying the subject you study or (b) getting a good result in the subject?
(instrumental motivation/need for achievement)

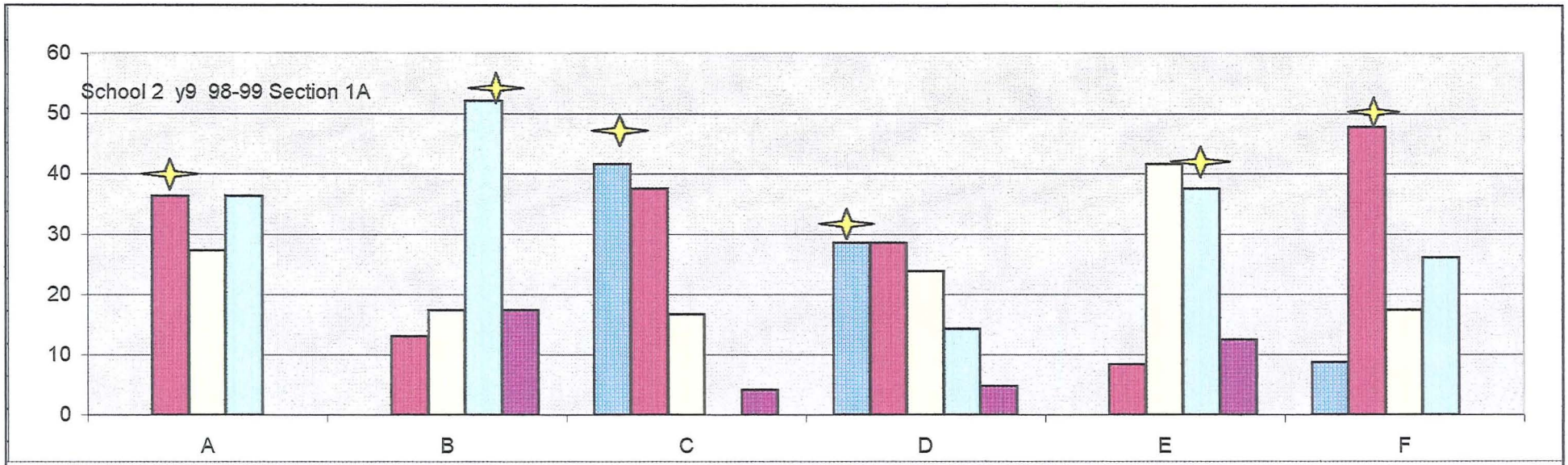
8. How difficult would you rate French/German compared with your other GCSE subjects?

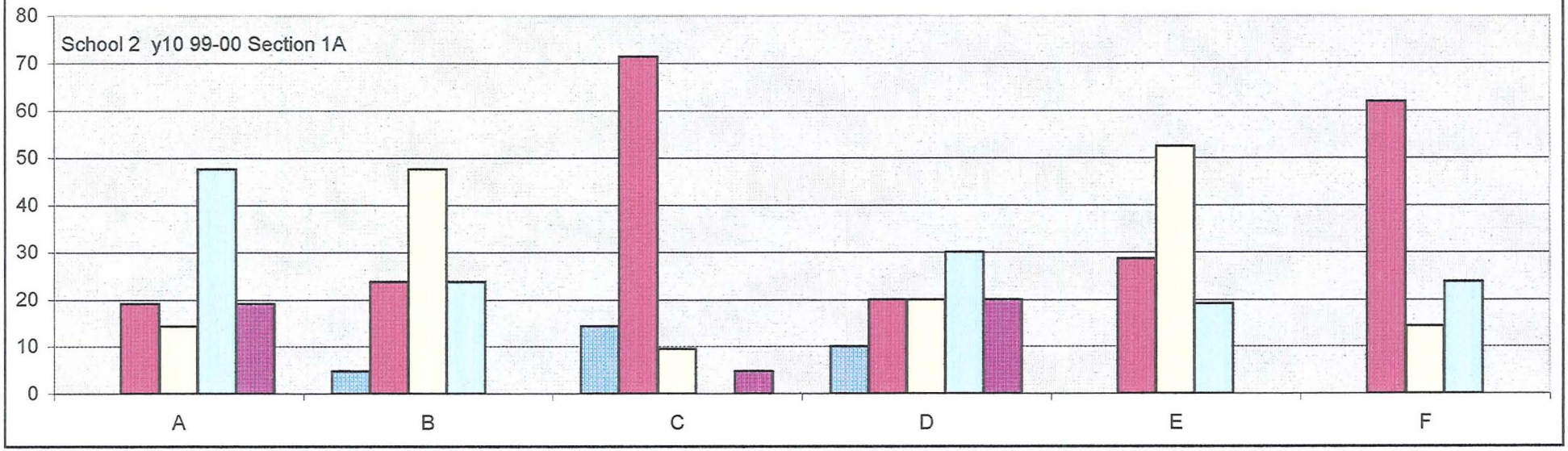
Easier unsure about the same more difficult

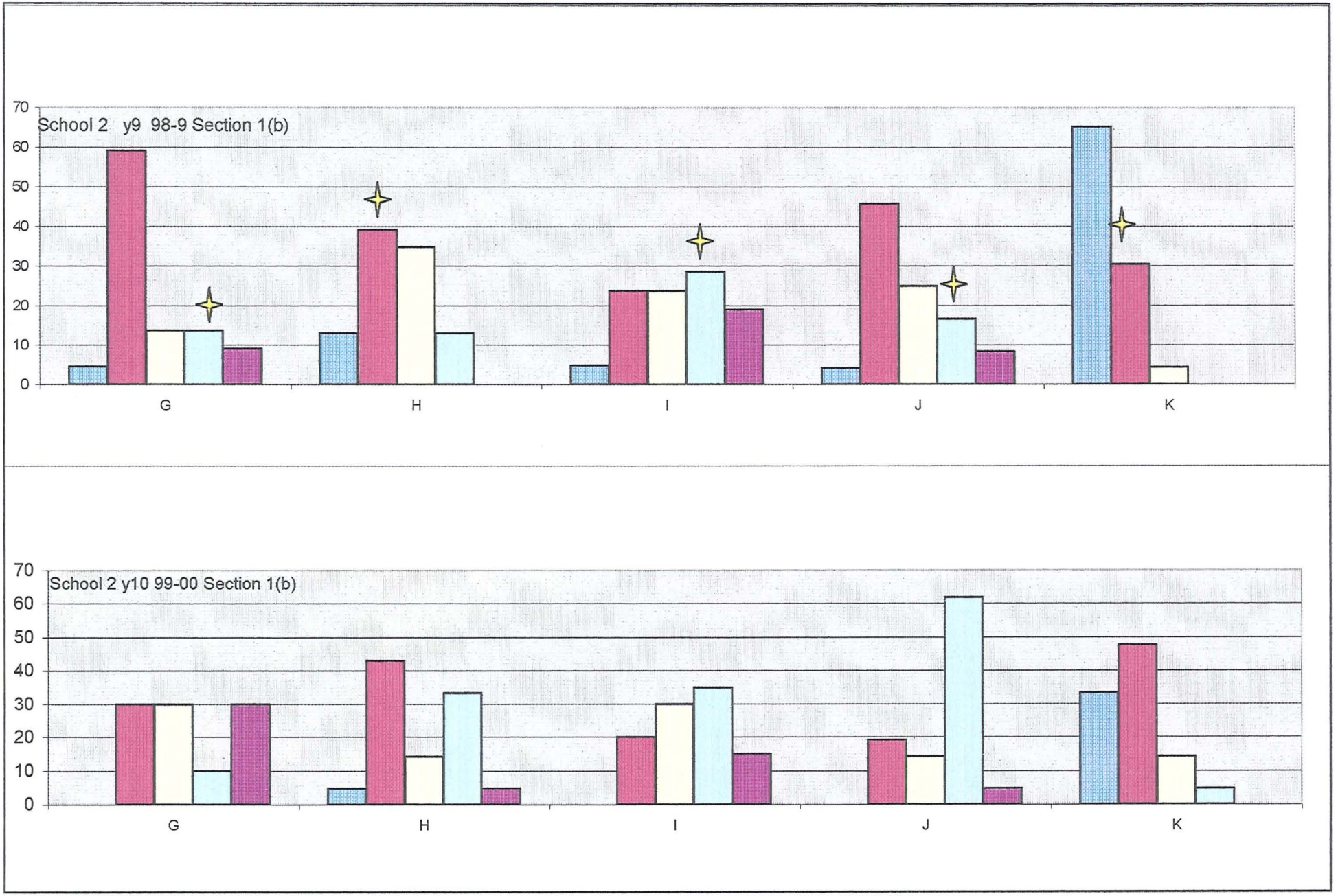
RESULTS / FINDINGS

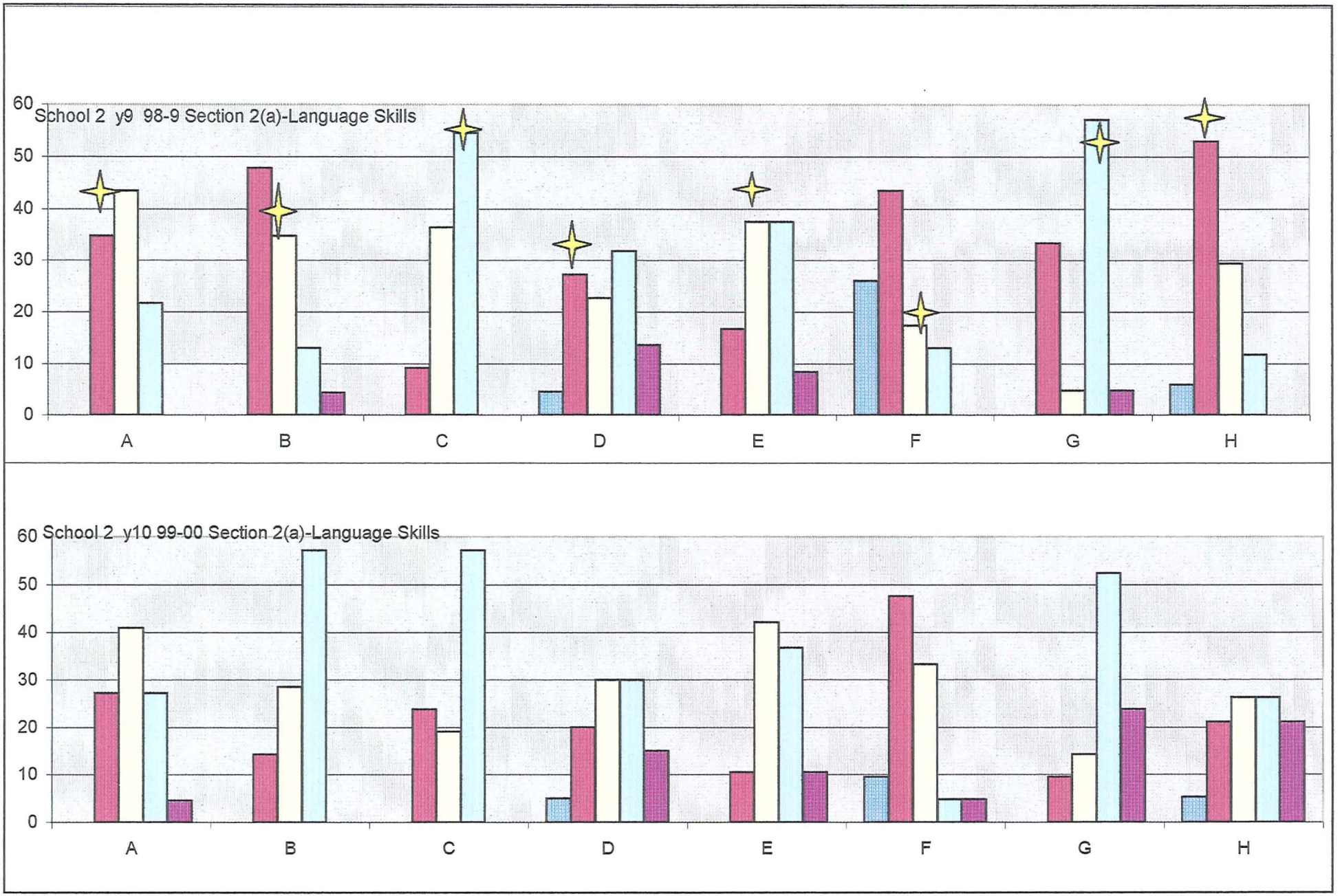
Ques1 Bar Charts including Staff Responses – SCHOOL 2

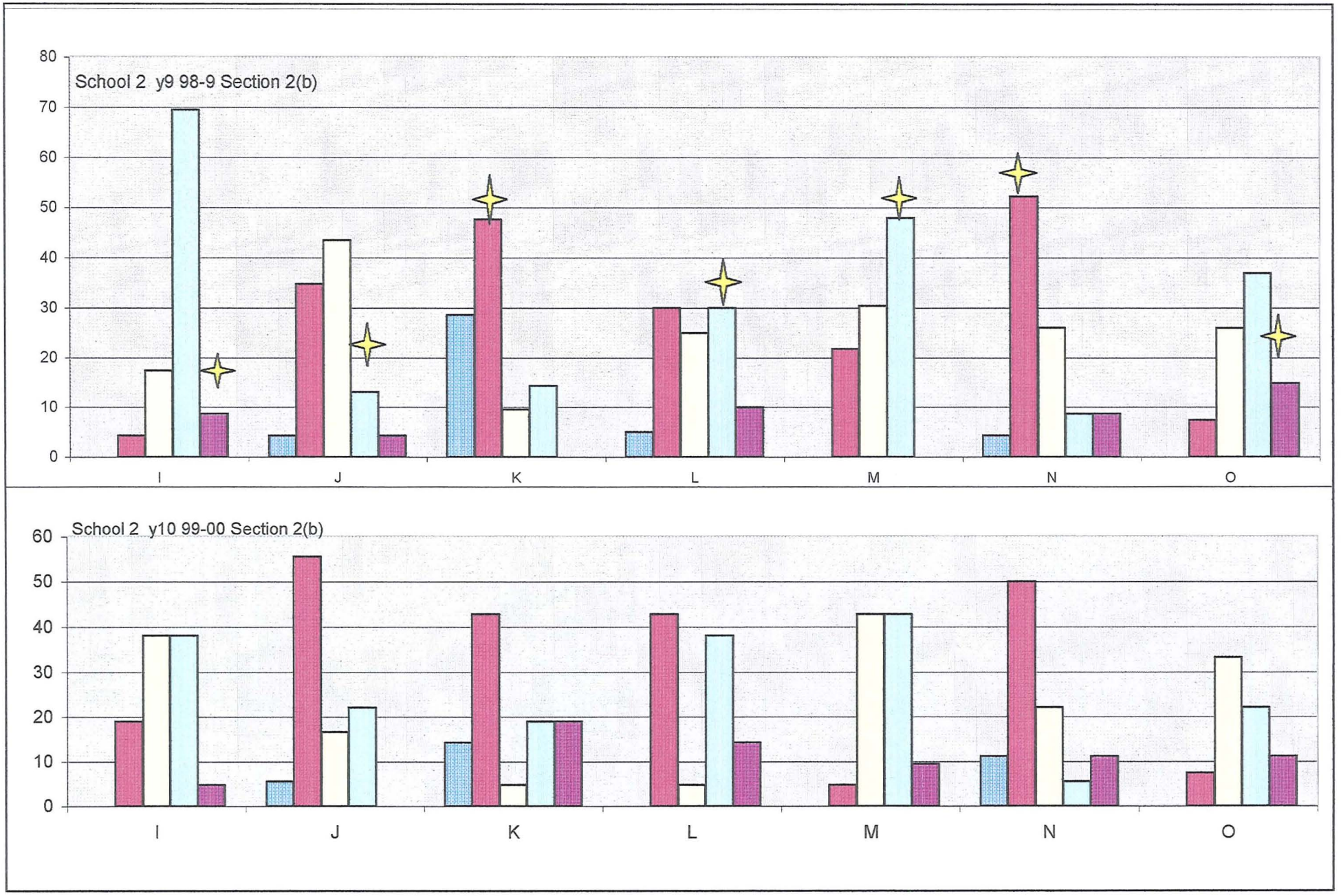
SEE OVERLEAF

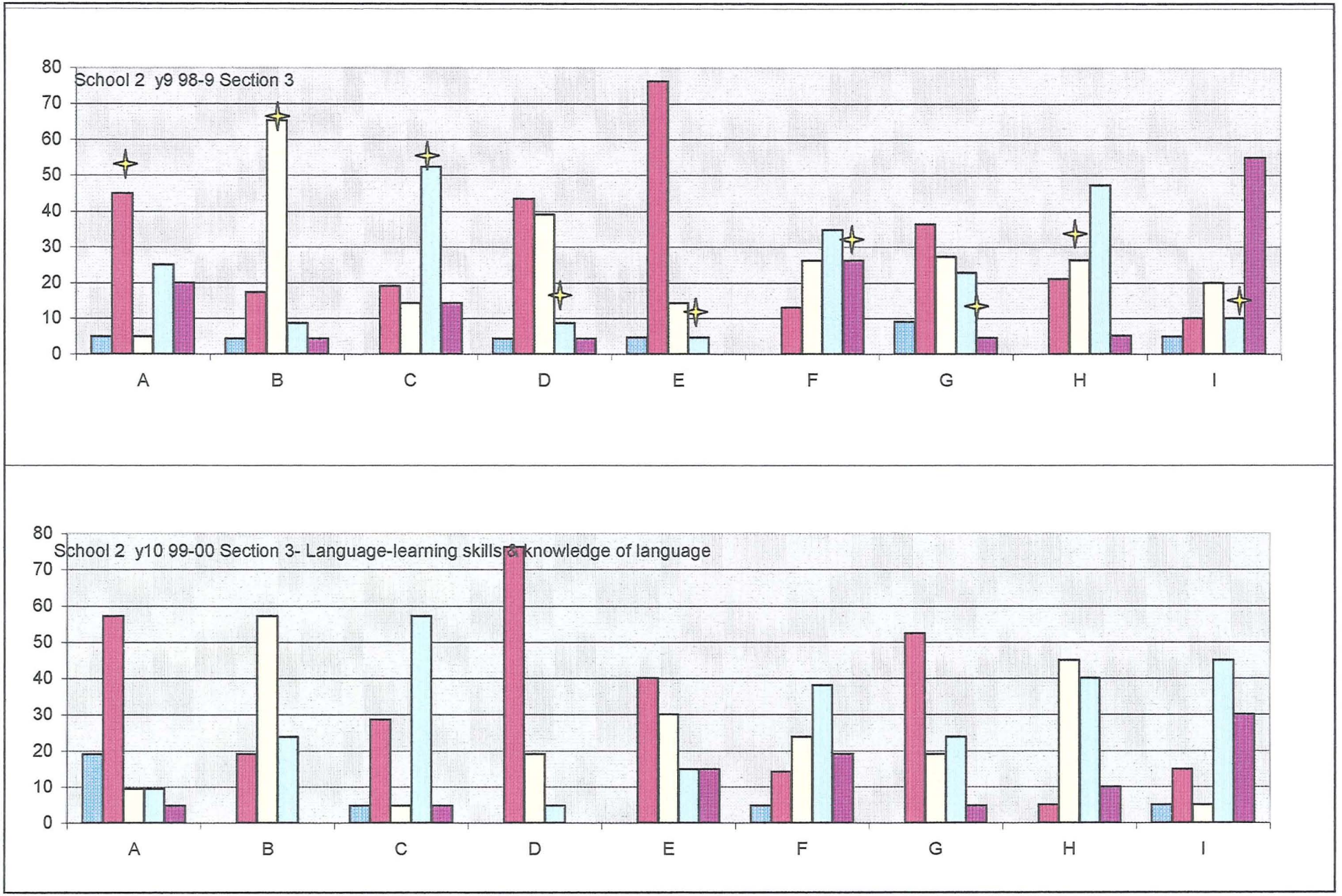

School 2 y9 98-99 Section 1A
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
A
B
C
D
E
F


School 2 y10 99-00 Section 1A
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
A
B
C
D
E
F


School 2 y9 98-9 Section 1(b)
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
G
H
I
J
K
School 2 y10 99-00 Section 1(b)
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
G
H
I
J
K


School 2 y9 98-9 Section 2(a)-Language Skills
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
School 2 y10 99-00 Section 2(a)-Language Skills
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H


School 2 y9 98-9 Section 2(b)
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
I
J
K
L
M
N
O
School 2 y10 99-00 Section 2(b)
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
I
J
K
L
M
N
O


School 2 y9 98-9 Section 3
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I

School 2 y10 99-00 Section 3- Language-learning skills & knowledge of language
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I

***Ques1* tracked changes & possible factors-School 2**

SAMPLE 98-9 & 99-00 (Y9 & Y10 upper bands) -SUMMARY INDICATING POSSIBLE TRENDS: All figures quoted are percentages.

1. Communicating in the target language

	SKILL	POSSIBLE CONCLUSIONS OF DATA/COMMENTS	POSS. TREND
a	communicate with each other in pairs and groups, and with their teacher;	Positive response reduced by 50%. Significant rise in dislike & d'like a lot. Balanced response of 98-9 (36% pos & neg) replaced by strongly unfavourable response to an irreducible skill at the heart of MFL teaching. Should be viewed by all teachers as extremely disappointing response.	**1**
b	use language for real purposes, as well as to practise skills;	Already an unpopular skill with 69% expressing negative view of activities described. 99-00 produced a more even response. No conclusions could be drawn when 48% are uncertain about the skill or don't know. This is most likely due to unfamiliarity with the skill. Could the 29% pos response be explained by use of FLA in y10? Students are able to understand "real purposes".	**3**
c	develop their understanding and skills through a range of language activities, *e.g. games, role-play, surveys and other investigations;*	98-9 produced a highly positive response to this skill with 42% liking the activities a lot and a total positive response of 80%. Whilst 99-00 saw the former drop to 14% the latter remained around the 98-9 figure. There is therefore no significant change recorded here. It is perhaps important to acknowledge that the high degree of student freedom and control inherent in the activities quoted appeal to most students whether y9 or y10. It is significant that this is not the case with lower band groups.	**3**
d	take part in imaginative and creative activities, *e.g. improvised drama;*	It is difficult to explain why older students who often incline to GCSE Drama coursework should find this skill less appealing in MFL. Students asked emphasise the restricting role played by the foreign language.	**2**
e	use everyday classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech;	The main response remains ns i.e. unchanged, although the unplanned, spontaneous element obviously appealed to a third of the students. It is interesting to note that no y10 hated / dislike a lot the activities described.	**3**
f	discuss their own ideas, interests and experiences and compare them with those of others;	The majority vote 62 remains positive indicating a healthy readiness and curiosity to compare ideas, life-styles, interests with peers. This positive response probably also extends to foreign peers and indicates that this is a potentially rich area to be exploited by MFL teachers. Sadly, a quarter of students remains averse.	**3**
g	listen, read or view	A dramatically positive response of 64% in 98-9	**1**

	for personal interest and enjoyment, as well as for information;	becomes an issue of thirds in 99-00 with 30% continuing to enjoy the skill as taught, 30 disliking and 30% unsure about the skill. Even the freedom of reading without the need to complete accompanying worksheets did not appeal to more.	
h	listen and respond to different types of spoken language;	Positive vote remains at c. 40%. Possible reasons are the pace of listening work, which often appeals. The rise in the negative response to 38% is disappointing given the importance of the skill.	**2**
i	read hand-written and printed texts of different types and of varying lengths and, where appropriate, read aloud;	Y10 study elicited a slightly less positive response than y9 with a general trend towards more negative reactions (50%) to the skill as defined. The skill represents 25% of available marks at GCSE.	**2/3**
j	produce a variety of types of writing	67% negative response indicates a dramatic change from y9. The relatively low ns reaction is significant and perhaps indicates a sureness in defining the skill in question or a polarisation of views towards the skill in KS4. 20% still expressed a liking for the skill, which represents 25% of marks at GCSE.	**1**
k	use a range of resources for communicating, *e.g. telephone, electronic mail, fax, letters.*	Still a largely positive response to the examples quoted although the attraction of the skill attracted the highest vote in 98-9, which dropped a category 99-00. It is essential to note many schools do not possess the facilities to deliver these skills. The results, therefore, remain a theoretical positive vote. Nevertheless, more pupils recorded an unsure response in y10.	**2**

2. Language skills

a	listen attentively, and listen for gist and detail;	Still very much polarised view with 41-43% expressing uncertainty. Given the transparency of the skill this is unlikely to be an uncertainty about what the skill entails, rather a genuine ambivalence. This echoes the disappointing response evident in section 1h. More evidence of a significant group (27%) enjoying irreplaceable language learning skills that evoke a negative response with an equally significant 32%?	**3**
b	follow instructions and directions;	57% negative response from 73% positive represents a clear message from the pupils of this group. This level of dislike, if replicated, in other results raises questions about the use of the TL in MFL lessons.	**1**
c	ask about meanings, seek clarification or repetition;	This skill was never popular with group and continues as such. This seems to be seen by students as using the MFL for real purpose and deeply disliked.	**3**
d	ask and answer	A variety of responses unchanged in any significant	**3**

	questions, and give instructions;	way.	
e	ask for and give information and explanations;	As above	**3**
f	imitate pronunciation and intonation patterns;	Largely unchanged. A slightly less positive view of imitating the MFL sounds may be discerned here.	**2/3**
g	initiate and develop conversations;	98-9 polarised view with 57% neg response but 33% positive. 99-00 saw negative view prevail (52% dislike with 24% dislike a lot)	**1**
h	express agreement, disagreement, personal feeling and opinions;	Positive view becomes negative including increase in dislike a lot from 0%-21%	**1**
i	describe and discuss present, past and future events;	On of the few areas that records a change of opinions for the better. No obvious reasons why this should be.	**4**
j	skim and scan texts, including databases where appropriate, for information;	Evidence seems to indicate pupils enjoy scanning for information rather than exploring detail. esp. information on the computer screen e.g. internet pages	**4**
k	copy words, phrases and sentences;	A simple skill that often boosts confidence and explains the positive views at KS3 (the same phenomena was observed by APU, 1985). The like a lot response is reduced at KS4 and helps produce a 19% dislike a lot not evident in y9.	**2**
l	make notes from what they hear or read;	Despite the reduction of unsure students the same polarisation of view is evident in both years. 52% negative.	**3**
m	summarise and report the main points of spoken or written texts;	Majority view 98-9 negative (48%). Significant decrease in pos view to 5%.	**2**
n	redraft their writing to improve its accuracy and presentation, *e.g. by word-processing;*	Largely unchanged. Students like making a fair copy of work whether word-processed or not.	**3**
o	vary language to suit context, audience and purpose;	Difficult concept to explain to teenagers. Responses remain similar for both years including a large unsure response. Majority response negative (52% & 33%)	**3**

3. Language-learning skills and knowledge of language

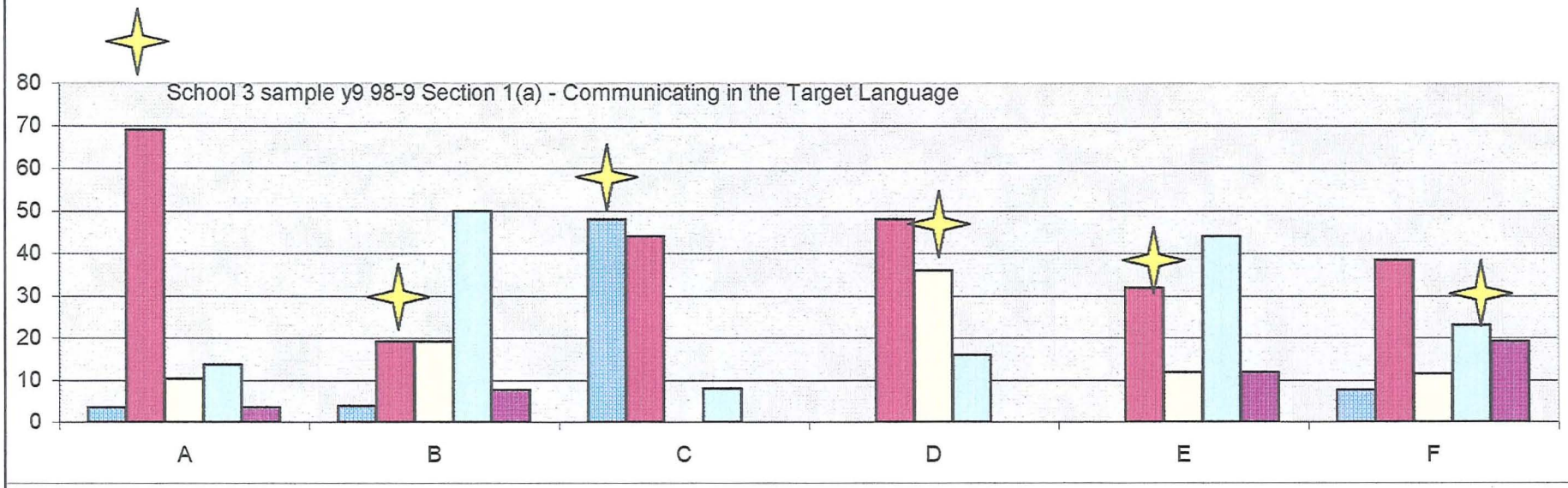
a	learn by heart phrases and short extracts, *e.g. rhymes, poems, songs, jokes, tongue*	Positive response remains similar but negative view is halved indicating more favourable opinion. Given the positive response it behoves teachers to use the skill more often than it is at present in these schools.	**4**

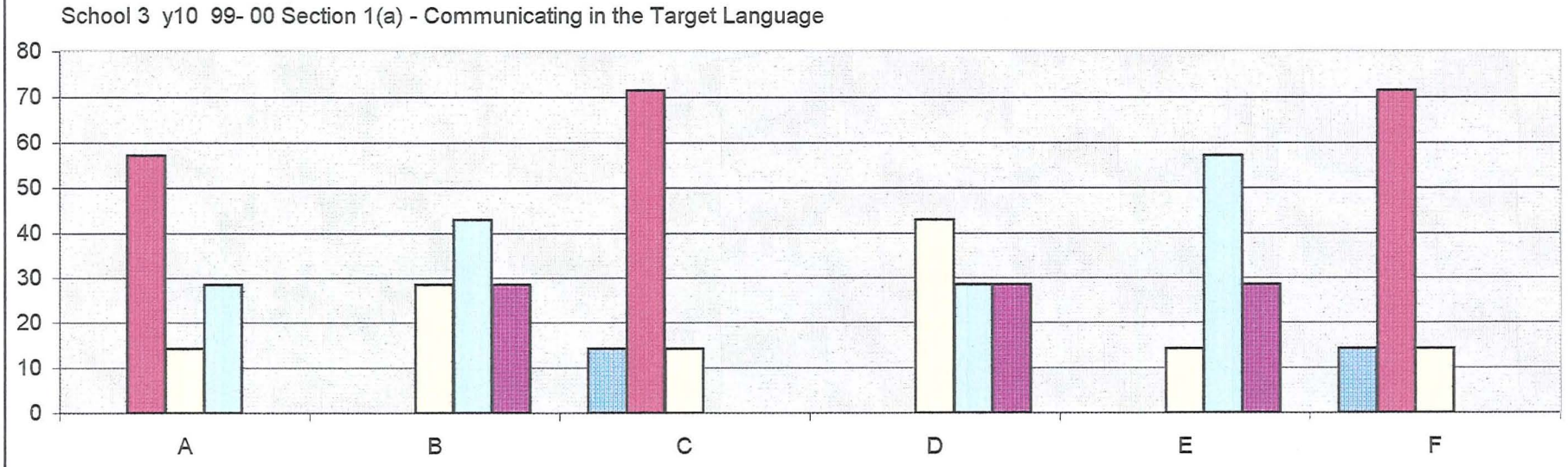
	twisters;		
b	acquire strategies for committing familiar language to memory;	A largely negative response cannot hide the uncertainty about what this skill entails. Does this indicate a greater need to introduce study skills earlier?	**2**
c	develop their independence in language learning use;	Disappointing majority verdict (52% and 57%) suggesting staff introducing a greater freedom in MFL learning cannot change the predominately negative view of this aspect of the subject.	**3**
d	use dictionaries and reference materials;	A dramatic surge in the positive response to using reference works.	**4**
e	use context and other clues to interpret meaning;	Despite an increase in the negative responses, a healthy 40% retain a positive view of this skill.	**2**
f	understand and apply patterns, rules exceptions in language forms and structures;	A predictably negative view of grammar and rule learning which remains similar into y10.	**3**
g	use their knowledge to experiment with language;	No significant change between the years but a surprisingly positive view of experimenting with the language. Does this contradict "using language for real purpose"? What is it about this skill that makes it more enjoyable to y9 & y10?	**3**
h	Understand and use formal language	Many students express the view that formal and informal language is an irrelevancy or a mystery- hence the large unsure vote.	**2**
i	Develop strategies for dealing with the unpredictable	Retaining a negative response confirming students' suspicion of any skill requiring spontaneous use of the language.	**3**

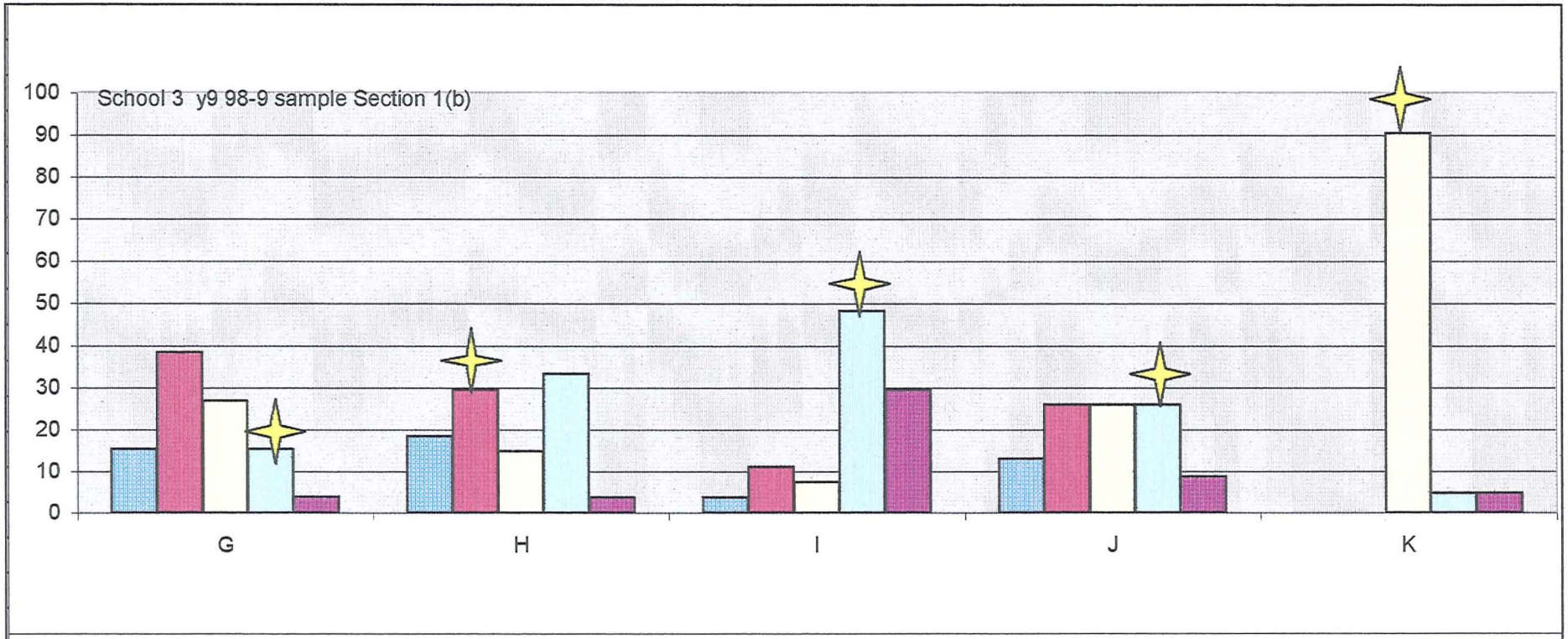
Summary of changes-School 2

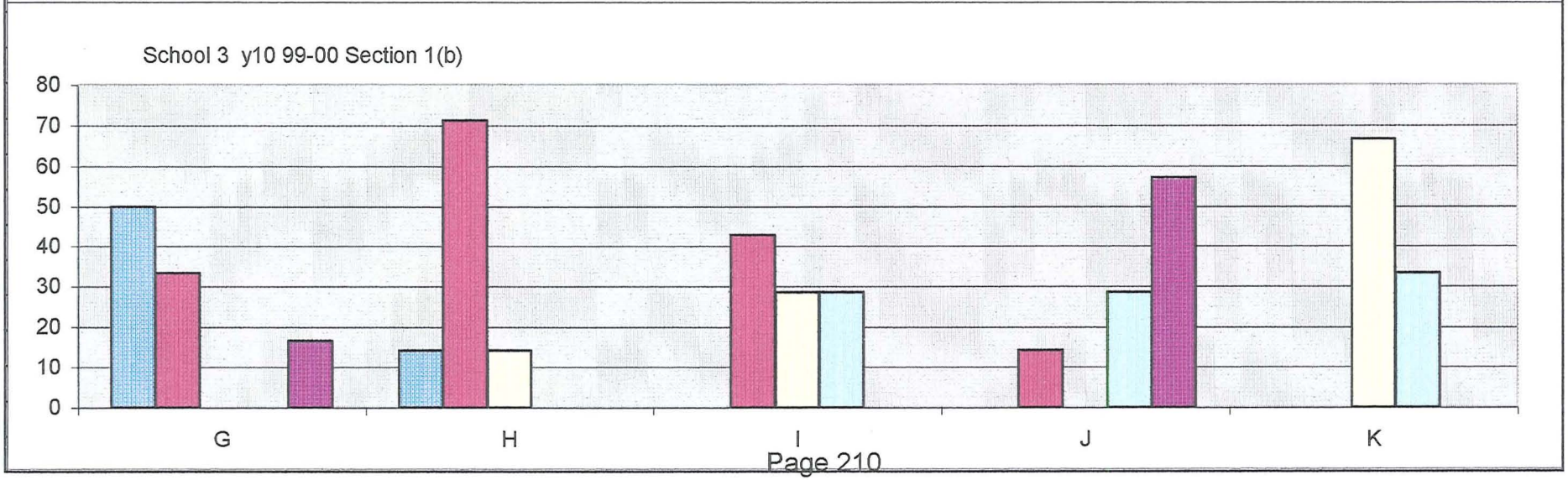
CATEGORY OF TRACKED CHANGE: SCHOOL 2	INCIDENCE OF POSSIBLE CHANGE Y9 -Y10	% INCIDENCE OF POSSIBLE CHANGE
1: Change detected reflecting a more dramatic change from a more to a less positive view of MFL study	6	**16**
2: Change detected in student responses indicating a move to a less positive view of MFL study. Degree of change varies.	9	**25**
3: No significant change evident. / Difficult to detect change.	15	**42**
4: Change detected in student responses indicating a move to a more positive view of MFL study. Degree of change varies.	4	**11**
5: Change detected reflecting a more dramatic change from a less to a more positive view of MFL study	0	**0**

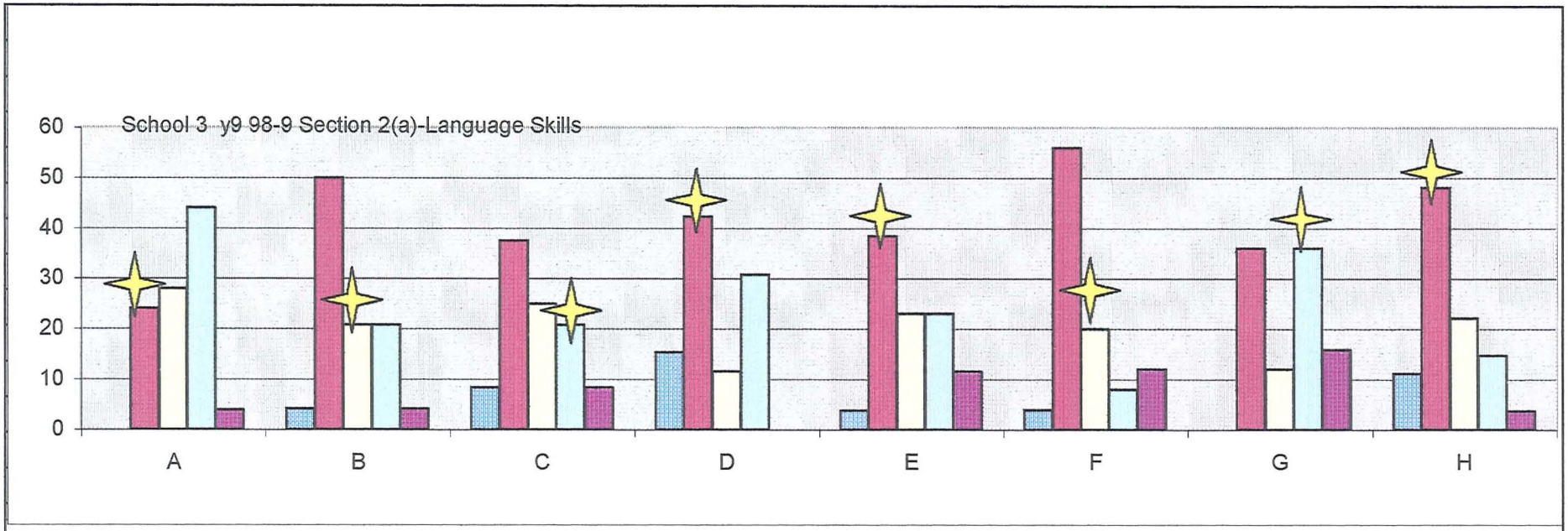
Ques1 Bar Charts including Staff Responses – SCHOOL 3

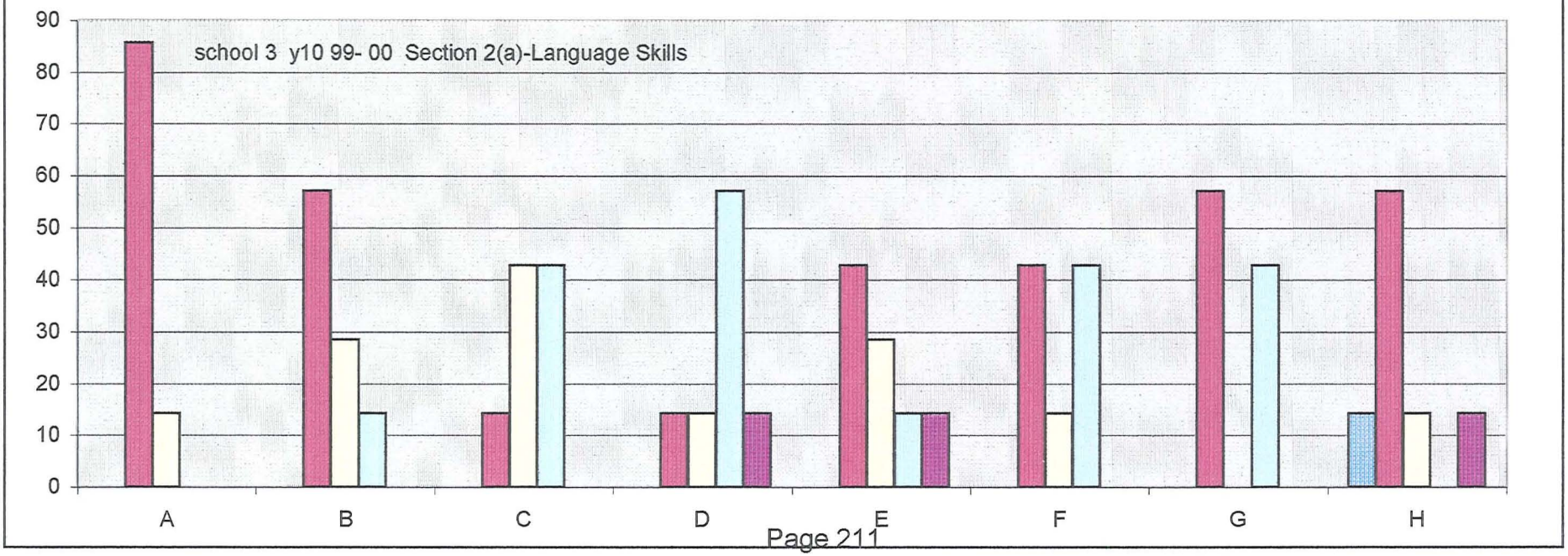

School 3 sample y9 98-9 Section 1(a) - Communicating in the Target Language
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
A
B
C
D
E
F

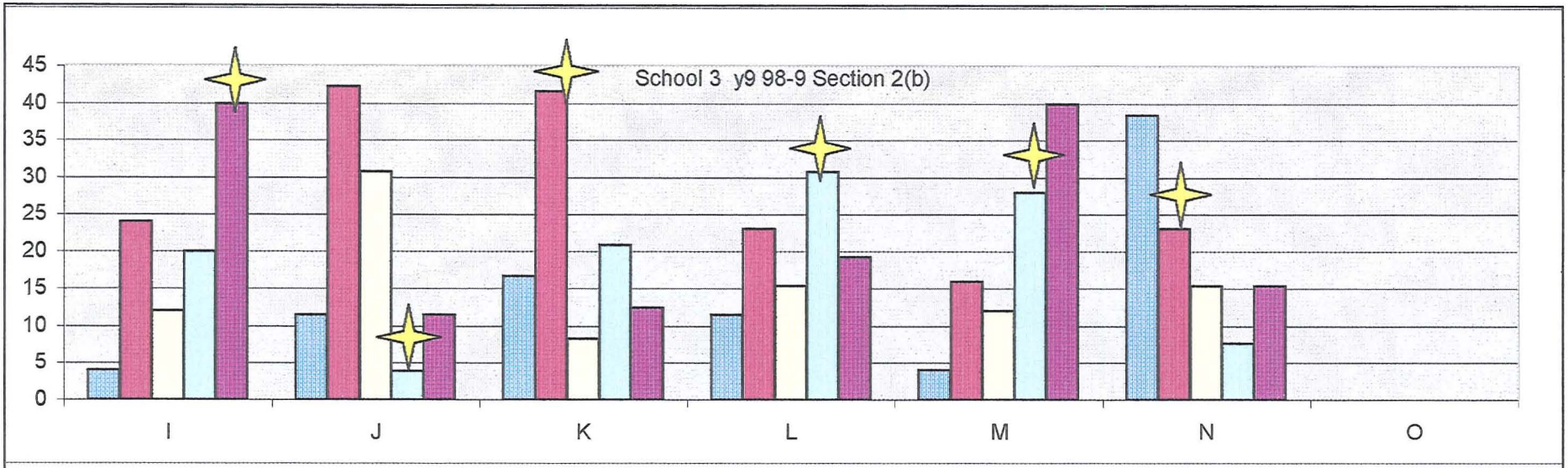

School 3 y10 99- 00 Section 1(a) - Communicating in the Target Language
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
A
B
C
D
E
F

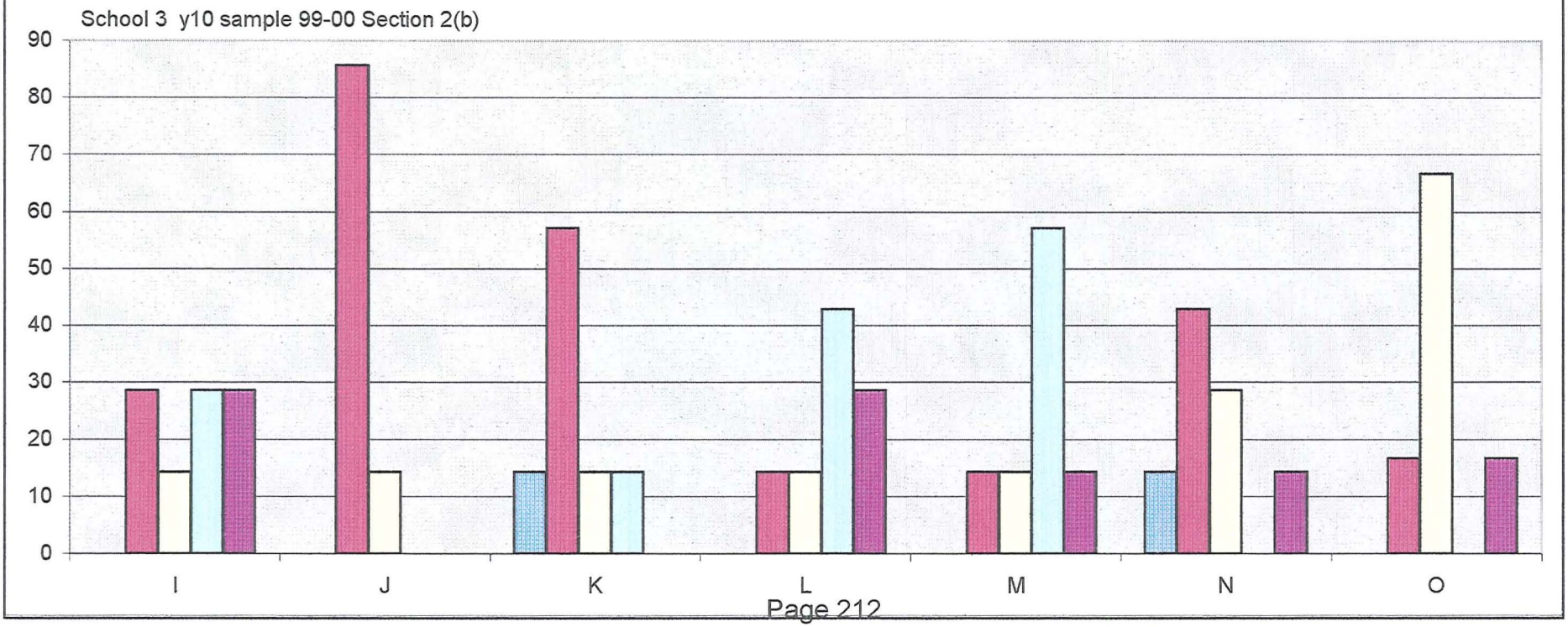

School 3 y9 98-9 sample Section 1(b)
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
G
H
I
J
K

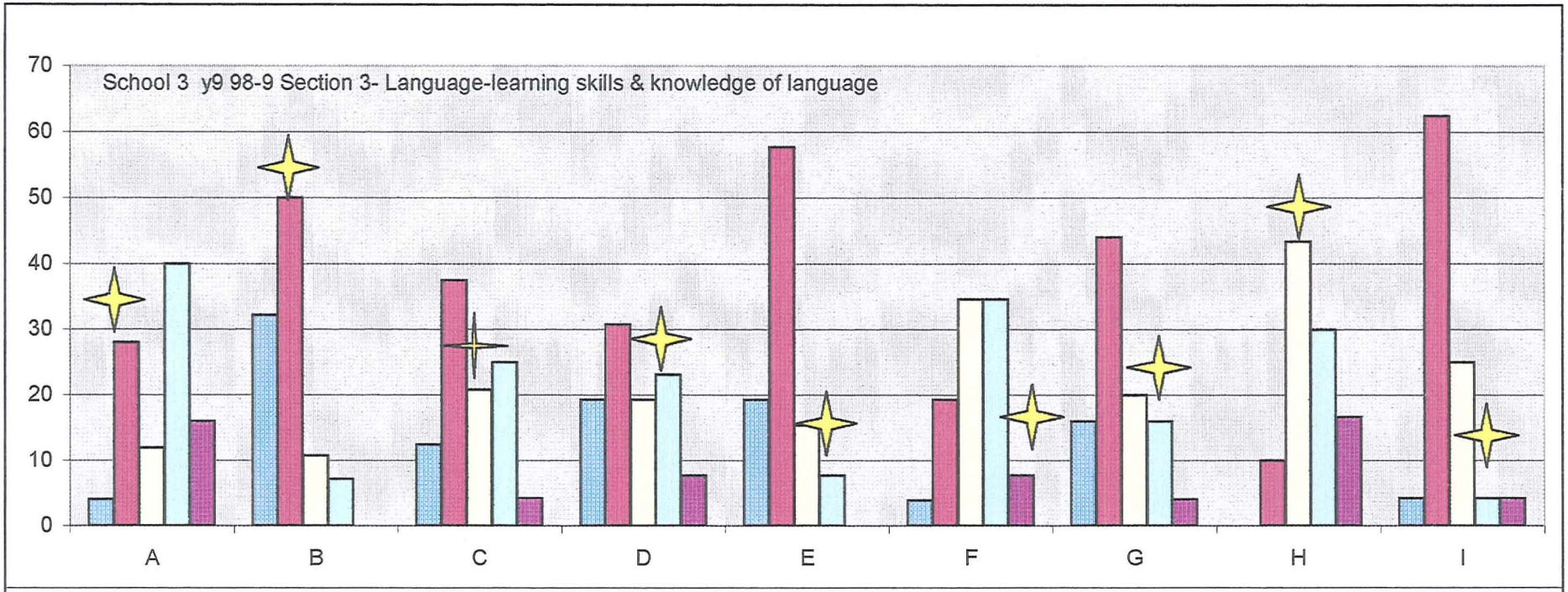

School 3 y10 99-00 Section 1(b)
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
G
H
I
J
K

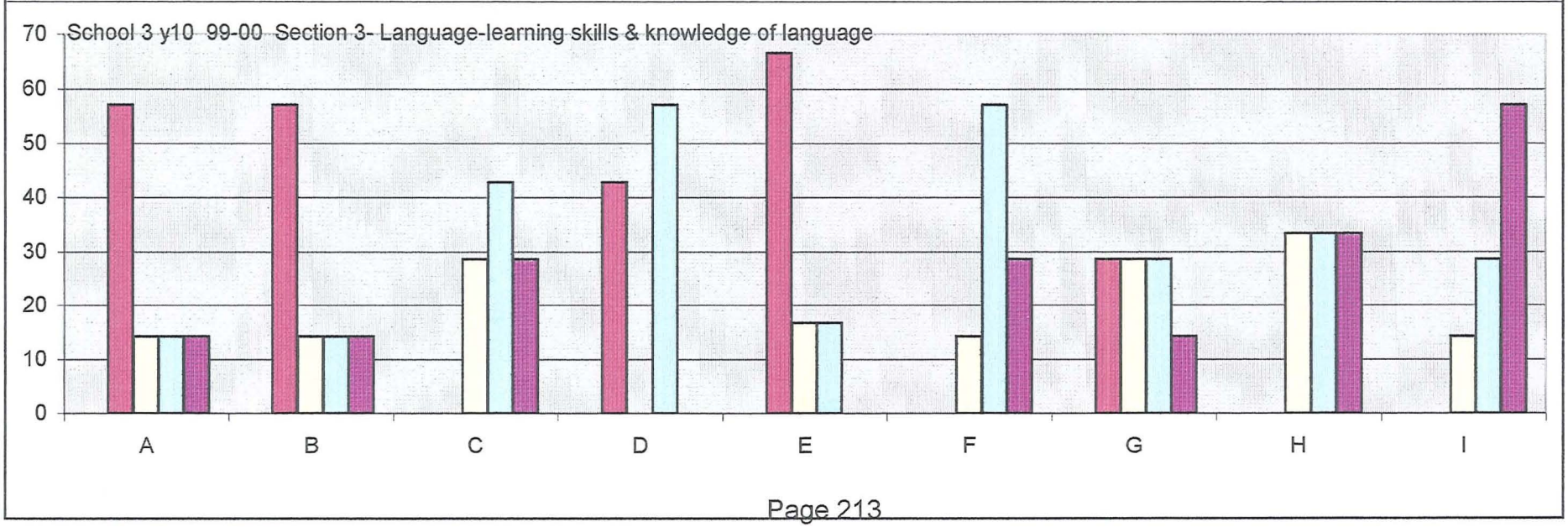

School 3 y9 98-9 Section 2(a)-Language Skills
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H


school 3 y10 99- 00 Section 2(a)-Language Skills
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H


School 3 y9 98-9 Section 2(b)
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
I
J
K
L
M
N
O


School 3 y10 sample 99-00 Section 2(b)
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
I
J
K
L
M
N
O


School 3 y9 98-9 Section 3- Language-learning skills & knowledge of language
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I


School 3 y10 99-00 Section 3- Language-learning skills & knowledge of language
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I

Questionnaire 1 (*Ques1*) tracked changes & possible factors (School 3)

SAMPLE 98-9 & 99-00 (Y9 & Y10 upper set) -SUMMARY INDICATING POSSIBLE TRENDS:

1. Communicating in the target language

	SKILL	POSSIBLE CONCLUSIONS OF DATA/COMMENTS	POSS. TREND
a	communicate with each other in pairs and groups, and with their teacher;	Positive response sustained. Small rise in dislike. Despite this remains a positive response to this fundamentally important skill.	**3**
b	use language for real purposes, as well as to practise skills;	Already an unpopular skill with 50% expressing negative view of activities described. The positive view disappeared entirely and the most extreme negative view tripled to c. 30%	**2**
c	develop their understanding and skills through a range of language activities, *e.g. games, role-play, surveys and other investigations;*	Remains a popular skill	**3**
d	take part in imaginative and creative activities, *e.g. improvised drama;*	Sharp decline. It is difficult to explain why older students who often incline to GCSE Drama coursework should find this skill less appealing in MFL. Students asked emphasise the restricting role played by the foreign language.	**1**
e	use everyday classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech;	The main response remains ns i.e. unchanged, although the unplanned, spontaneous element obviously appealed to a third of the students. It is interesting to note that this proportion hated the activities described in y10.	**1**
f	discuss their own ideas, interests and experiences and compare them with those of others;	Mainly positive response with elimination of all negative	**4**
g	listen, read or view for personal interest and enjoyment, as well as for information;	A positive response of 52% in 98-9 improves in 99-00 with 88% continuing to enjoy the skill as taught. There was no negative reaction.	**4**
h	listen and respond to different types of spoken language;	Rise in popularity of this activity	**4**
i	read hand-written and printed texts of different types and of varying lengths and, where appropriate, read aloud;	Massive rise in popularity of this activity	**5**

j	produce a variety of types of writing	57% dislike a lot response indicates a dramatic change from y9. The low ns reaction is significant (replicated in SCHOOL 2) and perhaps indicates a sureness in defining the skill in question or a polarisation of views towards the skill in KS4. 14% still expressed a liking for the skill, which represents 25% of marks at GCSE.	**1**
k	use a range of resources for communicating, *e.g. telephone, electronic mail, fax, letters.*	Surprisingly, a largely ambivalent response continuing from y9 to y10 with 33% dlike. This contrasts with SCHOOL 2	**3**

2. Language skills

a	listen attentively, and listen for gist and detail;	Impressive 86% positive	**5**
b	follow instructions and directions;	No real change remaining a pos response	**3**
c	ask about meanings, seek clarification or repetition;	This skill was popular with c 40 % of group and drops to largely neg response. This seems to be seen by students as using the MFL for real purpose and checking work and, as such, disliked.	**2**
d	ask and answer questions, and give instructions;	A variety of responses with the pos element becoming neg.	**2**
e	ask for and give information and explanations;	No real change- a mainly pos reaction	**3**
f	imitate pronunciation and intonation patterns;	Enjoyed in y9. A less positive view of imitating the MFL sounds may be discerned here. Seen in SCHOOL 2 also.	**2**
g	initiate and develop conversations;	98-9 polarised view with 43% neg response but 57% positive. Similar in SCHOOL 2	**3**
h	express agreement, disagreement, personal feeling and opinions;	No change	**3**
i	describe and discuss present, past and future events;	No real change detected. Still a very ambivalent response to higher level MFL work.	**3**
j	skim and scan texts, including databases where appropriate, for information;	Dramatic change towards positive. Evidence seems to indicate pupils enjoy scanning for information rather than exploring detail. esp. information on the computer screen e.g. internet pages	**5**
k	copy words, phrases and sentences;	A simple skill that often boosts confidence and explains the positive views at KS3 (the same phenomena was observed by APU, 1985). The like a lot response is maintained at KS4 and dislike a lot not evident in y10 suggesting more able students also benefit from the effect..	**4**

l	make notes from what they hear or read;	Largely negative responses with only a small proportion liking the skill. 72% negative.	**2**
m	summarise and report the main points of spoken or written texts;	Majority view 98-9 negative (68%). Decrease in pos view. As with (l) above seen as dull.	**3**
n	redraft their writing to improve its accuracy and presentation, *e.g. by word-processing;*	Largely unchanged. Students like making a fair copy of work whether word-processed or not.	**3**
o	vary language to suit context, audience and purpose;	Difficult concept to explain to teenagers. Responses remain similar to other schools for both years including a large unsure response.	**3**

3. Language-learning skills and knowledge of language

a	learn by heart phrases and short extracts, *e.g. rhymes, poems, songs, jokes, tongue twisters;*	Positive response increases but negative view is halved indicating more favourable opinion. Given the positive response it behoves teachers to use the skill more often than it is at present in these schools.	**5**
b	acquire strategies for committing familiar language to memory;	A largely positive response despite changes.	**2**
c	develop their independence in language learning use;	Ambivalent response suggesting staff introducing a greater freedom in MFL learning cannot change the predominately negative view of this aspect of the subject for 57%. Unlike in the other schools 40%+ retain an interest.	**1**
d	use dictionaries and reference materials;	A dramatic surge in the positive response to using reference works.	**2**
e	use context and other clues to interpret meaning;	Despite a fall in the v. pos responses, a healthy 67% retain a positive view of this skill.	**3**
f	understand and apply patterns, rules exceptions in language forms and structures;	A predictably negative view of grammar and rule learning which worsens in y10.	**1**
g	use their knowledge to experiment with language;	v. positive vote disappears and is replaced by mainly negative	**2**
h	Understand and use formal language	Many students express the view that formal and informal language is an irrelevancy or a mystery- hence the large unsure/negative vote.	**2**
i	Develop strategies for dealing with the unpredictable	Radical change from 98-9.	**1**

Summary of changes-School 3

CATEGORY OF TRACKED CHANGE: SCHOOL 3	INCIDENCE OF POSSIBLE CHANGE Y9 -Y10	% INCIDENCE OF POSSIBLE CHANGE
1: Change detected reflecting a more dramatic change from a more to a less positive view of MFL study	6	**17**
2: Change detected in student responses indicating a move to a less positive view of MFL study. Degree of change varies.	9	**26**
3: No significant change evident. / Difficult to detect change.	12	**34**
4: Change detected in student responses indicating a move to a more positive view of MFL study. Degree of change varies.	4	**11**
5: Change detected reflecting a more dramatic change from a less to a more positive view of MFL study	4	**11**

Questionnaire 2 (*Ques2*) results chart (n=59)

1	**Has secondary school been as good/not so good as you expected?**						
	better	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**worse**	
		12	20	21	1		54
	%	***22***	***37***	***39***	***2***		
2a	**Have the subjects been as good/not so good as you expected?**						
	better	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**worse**	
		4	29	19	4		56
	%	*7*	***52***	***34***	*7*		
2 b	**And MFL?**						
	better	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**worse**	
		4	17	19	17		57
	%	*7*	***30***	***33***	***30***		
3	**What do you enjoy most/least about coming to school?**						
	most	**incidence of opinion**	***% of opinion expr'd***				
3	social	45	***74***				
	Enjlessons/achievement	16	***26***				
		61					
4	**least**						
	quotidian/procedural	14	***50***				
	unenjoyable/diff. Work	13	***46***				
	teachers	1	***4***				
		28					
5	**Two most useful subjects**						
	MFL	0	***0%***				
6	**Two least useful subjects**						
	MFL	12	***21%***				
7	**MFL ranking in perceived importance**						
	Rank	**Freq.**	*%*				
	1	0	***0***				
	2	1	***2***				
	3	3	***5***				
	4	11	***18***				
	5	17	***28***				
	6	11	***18***				
	7	9	***15***				
	8	5	***8***				
	9	3	***5***				
		60					
8	**MFL =most/least**						

	preferred subject						
	most	***1***	***2***	***3***	***4***	***least***	
		1	9	27	20		57
	%	***2***	***16***	***47***	***35***		
9	**Reasons for learning MFL**						
			agree	unsure	disagree	total	
a	better job(instrumental motivation)		23	15	18	56	
		%	***41***	***27***	***32***		
b	cultural interest (integrative motivation)		2	13	42	57	
		%	***4***	***23***	***74***		
c	meeting people(integrative/instrumental)		32	14	8	54	
		%	***59***	***26***	***15***		
d	indicator of educ. (intellectual achievement)		23	20	15	58	
		%	***40***	***34***	***26***		
e	enjoyment		8	19	30	57	
		%	***14***	***31***	***53***		
f	lack of choice/compulsory element		33	11	13	57	
		%	***58***	***19***	***23***		
10	**Truanted because of MFL?**		yes	3			
			no	42			
11	**Perceived effort level**					%	
	I try very hard in MFL				13	***22***	
	I try quite hard in MFL				34	***57***	
	I don't try at all in MFL				13	***22***	
					60		
12	My teacher thinks I try very hard in MFL				9	***16***	
	My teacher thinks I try quite hard in MFL				24	***41***	
	My teacher thinks I don't really try at all in MFL				11	***19***	
	I don't know what she thinks				14	***24***	
					58		
13	**Perceived progress**					*%*	
	I am making excellent progress in MFL				7	***12***	
	I am making good progress in MFL				26	***43***	
	I am making				22	***37***	

	satisfactory progress in MFL						
	I am making poor progress in MFL				5	***8***	
					60		
14	The teacher thinks I'm making excellent progress				6	***10***	
	The teacher thinks I'm making good progress				17	***28***	
	The teacher thinks I'm making satisfactory progress				12	***20***	
	The teacher thinks I'm making poor progress				4	*7*	
	I don't know what she thinks				21	***57***	
					60		
15	**Tick those that apply**						
	I want to continue study of MFL				***5***		
	Speak MFL well enough to work abroad				10		
	Working towards a good GCSE				37		
	Give it up asap				14		
	Haven't really thought about it				16		
	don't care				6		
16	**Use of MFL by teacher**						
	Interesting/makes you concentrate				9		
	learn more				16		
	difficult but I try				35		
	off putting				16		
17	**Use of MFL by respondent**						
	Interesting/makes you concentrate				7		
	learn more				15		
	difficult but I try				38		
	off putting				11		
18	**MFL should be:**						
	increased				6		
	status quo				33		
	decrease				19		
19	**MFL should be:**						
	compulsory				17		
	optional				37		
	KS3 only				3		

	dropped				2		
20	**countries visited**	EC		47	***68***	%	
		Americas		15	***22***		
		Africa		5	***7***		
		Asia		2	***3***		
		Australasia		0	***0***		
				69			
21	**People were:**		Positive	42	***88***		
			unclear/ neutral	3	***6***		
			negative	3	***6***		
22	N/A			48			
23	N/A			%			
24	**Would like to visit**	EC	14	***28***			
		Americas	18	***36***			
		Africa	1	***2***			
		Asia	7	***14***			
		Australasia	10	***20***			
		total	**50**	x3 FR/Ger			
25	**Learn language?**	Yes	17	***33***			
		No	35	***67***			
			52				
26	**Consider work abroad?**						
		yes	21	***41***			
		no	30	***59***			
			51				
27	Views of FR/GER	**Germans**		%			
		positive	27	***48***			
		negative	22	***39***			
		unclear/neutral	7	***13***			
		total	56				
		French					
		positive	24	***48***			
		negative	21	***42***			
		unclear/neutral	5	***10***			
		total	50				
	views of British						
	ethnocentricity?	positive	41	***76***			
		negative	12	***22***			
		unclear/neutral	1	***2***			
			54				
28	**The future:**						
	use MFL as much as possible		8	***14***			

	use MFL a little		40	***70***			
	try to forget subject		9	***16***			
	total		**57**				
29	**Situations encountered where MFL useful**						
	occasionally		12	***20***			
	rarely		23	***39***			
	never		24	***41***			
			59				
30	**Parents' knowledge of MFL**						
	lots	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**none**	
		4	12	19	24	59	
	%	***7***	***20***	***32***	***41***		
31	**Parental encouragement**						
	lots	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**none**	
		15	16	15	11	57	
	%	***26***	***28***	***26***	***19***		
32	**Opportunities to hear MFL?**						
		yes	30				
		no	20				
33	**Know any FR/GER Nationals?**			**%**			
		yes	22	***37***			
		no	38	***63***			
			60				
34	**Opinion of MFL changed?**						
		yes	25	***42***			
		no	34	***58***			
35	**How?**		**59**				
		better	7				
		more difficult	8				
		less enjoyable	9				

Structured Interviews Results- n=39

Section 1

Descriptor	PoS	Focus	Mean Rating SCHOOL 1	Mean Rating SCHOOL 2	Mean Rating SCHOOL 3
Communicate in pairs & with the teacher, develop their understanding and skills through a range of language activities, *eg games, role-play, surveys and other investigations;* Use everyday classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech; initiate and develop conversations;	1a & 1c 1e 2g	Using TL in pairwork. Confidence building opportunities. Controlling pace of work spontaneity	**3.9** **2.1**	**2.8**	**2.4** **2**
Ask about meanings, seek clarification or repetition; Use language for real purposes Develop strategies for dealing with the unpredictable	2c 1b 3i	Using TL in class speaking work with Teacher/FLA in front of peers/adults. Age of FLA	**2.4**	**1.7** **1.6**	**1.6**
discuss their own ideas, interests and experiences and compare them with those of others; express agreement, disagreement, personal feeling and opinions	f 2h	growing independence, exercising control in learning process	**3.5**	**3.0**	**2.9**
read or view for personal interest and enjoyment, as well as for information;	g	Controlling pace of learning, reading without recording answers	**3.1**	**3.2**	**3.3**
listen and respond to different types of spoken language;	h	Fast pace of listening material represents challenge/ achievement	**2.9**	**2.7**	**1.8**
produce a variety of types of writing summarise and report the	j 2m	Preferred types of writing. Preference for simple and mundane as	**3.5**	**3.1**	**3.1**

main points of spoken or written texts		confidence building.			
use a range of resources for communicating, *eg telephone, electronic mail, fax, letters.*	k	New technology	**3.0**	**3.5**	**3.0**

Section 2

understand and apply patterns, rules exceptions in language forms and structures; Understand and use formal and informal language; describe and discuss present, past and future events;	3f 3h 2i	Using grammar and applying to different contexts. Challenge and attributes of past failure rates	**2.4**	**2.3**	**1.3**
skim and scan texts, including databases where appropriate, for information;	j	Pace of learning, reading without recording answers	**3.5**	**2.7**	**2.9**
copy words, phrases and sentences; redraft their writing to improve its accuracy and presentation, *eg by word-processing*	k, n	Preferred types of writing. New technology. See 1j above.	**3.6**	**2.6**	**4.2**

Section 3

learn by heart phrases and short extracts, *eg rhymes, poems, songs, jokes, tongue twisters;*	a	KS3 methods in KS4	**2.6**	**2.6**	**1.9**
use dictionaries and reference materials;	d	Accuracy. Pace of learning	**3.4**	**3.0**	**3.2**
use context and other clues to interpret meaning; use their knowledge to experiment with language.	e g	Speculating, taking risks	**3.1**	**2.8**	**3.0**

2 What are your opinions of France and the French / Germany and the Germans?

SCHOOL 1 Negative 0% unsure / neutral 50% positive 50%
SCHOOL 2 Negative 23% unsure / neutral 59% positive 23%
SCHOOL 3 Negative 0% unsure / neutral 78% positive 22%

3 Where would MFL be in a ranking of your subjects from your favourite (1) to your least favourite (8)?

SCHOOL 1 mean ranking = 6.6, SCHOOL 2 mean ranking = 6.1, SCHOOL 3 mean ranking = 5.1

4 Do you really enjoy MFL? Enough to consider studying MFL 16-18? *(only 10% would admit to really enjoying MFL-Chambers, is this true in upper sets?)*

SCHOOL 1 absolutely 0% probably 0% unsure 25% probably not 38% absolutely not 25%
SCHOOL 2 absolutely 5% probably 0% unsure 5% probably not 27% absolutely not 55%
SCHOOL 3 absolutely 0% probably 0% unsure 1% probably not 1% absolutely not 78%

5 How useful are your subjects? Where would MFL be in a ranking of your subjects from the most useful (1) to the least useful (8)?
SCHOOL 1 mean ranking =6.4, SCHOOL 2 mean ranking= 3.9 SCHOOL 3 mean ranking = 4.3

6 Has you attitude to MFL changed since Year Nine?

SCHOOL 1	Better? 0%	Unsure? 25%	or Worse? 75%
SCHOOL 2	Better? 41%	Unsure? 5%	or Worse? 50%
SCHOOL 3	Better? 1%	Unsure? 22%	or Worse? 67%

7 Which is more important in your opinion
(a) enjoying the subject you study- **a)** SCHOOL 1 63% SCHOOL 2 55% SCHOOL 3 33%
or (b) getting a good result in the subject?- b) SCHOOL 1 36% SCHOOL 2 41% SCHOOL 3 67%
(instrumental motivation/need for achievement)

8 How difficult would you rate French/German compared with your other GCSE subjects?

SCHOOL 1	Easier 0%	unsure 0%	about the same 12%	more difficult 88%
SCHOOL 2	Easier 0%	unsure 0%	about the same 22%	more difficult 78%
SCHOOL 3	Easier 0%	unsure 0%	about the same 33%	more difficult 67%

Summary of *Ques1* positive and negative pupil responses

Positive responses	
Section 1	
a	communicate with each other in pairs and groups, and with their teacher (*Sch 2);
c	develop their understanding and skills through a range of language activities, *eg games, role-play, surveys and other investigations;*
f	discuss their own ideas, interests and experiences and compare them with those of others;
g	listen, read or view for personal interest and enjoyment, as well as for information (*Sch 2);
h	listen and respond to different types of spoken language (*Sch 2);
k	use a range of resources for communicating, *eg telephone, electronic mail, fax, letters.* (*Sch 3).
Section 2	
h	express agreement, disagreement, personal feeling and opinions (*Sch 2);
j	skim and scan texts, including databases where appropriate, for information;
k	copy words, phrases and sentences (*Sch 3);
n	redraft their writing to improve its accuracy and presentation, *eg by word-processing;*
Section 3	
a	learn by heart phrases and short extracts, *eg rhymes, poems, songs, jokes, tongue twisters* (*SCH 1);
d	use dictionaries and reference materials (*SCH 3);
e	use context and other clues to interpret meaning (*SCH 1);
g	use their knowledge to experiment with language;
Negative responses	
Section 1	
b	Use language for real purposes, as well as to practise skills;
e	Use everyday classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech;
j	produce a variety of types of writing (*SCH 1);
Section 2	
c	Ask about meanings, seek clarification or repetition;
g	initiate and develop conversations (*SCH 3);
i	describe and discuss present, past and future events;
m	summarise and report the main points of spoken or written texts (*SCH 1);
Section 3	
f	understand and apply patterns, rules exceptions in language forms and structures;
h	Understand and use formal and informal language;
i	Develop strategies for dealing with the unpredictable (see 1b)

Comparisons With Previous Research

THE APU ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE

What follows is taken from the "1985 APU Attitude Questionnaire" (section A7.1) and relates to attitudes to MFL tasks.
The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Part A contained some straightforward questions about the pupil's contact with the foreign community. This information was thought to be interesting both in itself and also as a background against which to examine responses to the other parts of the questionnaire.
Part B contained a list of 36 statements relating to pupils' feelings about learning foreign languages and contact with the foreign community. Pupils were asked to show the extent of their agreement with each statement by drawing a circle round one of these: *Strongly agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly disagree*
Overall, there was a balance of statements indicating a mixture of positive and negative attitudes towards a particular factor. In an attempt to counter pupils' tendency towards 'response set' statements were included which expressed similar ideas but which were formulated differently, e.g.

11. French will be useful to me after I leave school.
14. I'd like to get a job where I could use my French

It was hoped that the slightly different form of the second statement would cause pupils to reconsider their reaction to the idea, rather than to feel obliged to give a response consistent with that made to the earlier statement.
Part C focused on pupils' reactions to the kinds of activities, which take place in the foreign language.

Illustration A7. *Learning activities*

Activities	**LIKE A LOT**	**LIKE**	**NOT SURE**	**DISLIKE**	**DIS-LIKE A LOT**	**NOT DONE**
e.g.Answering the teacher's questions in French about a tape you have listened to						

Pupils had to indicate how much they liked or disliked activities or indicate 'Not Done'.
This category was added to prevent pupils from giving opinions on activities they had never done and give information on pupils' perceptions of what was done in class. The statements were related to aspect listening, reading, writing and speaking activities Illustration A7.1 shows a few of the statements
Pupils were then asked to answer four additional questions requiring them to write down the three activities they most liked, the three they most the three they found easiest and the three four difficult.
This was followed by a sub-section, which investigated foreign language homework. Pupils were asked the kinds of activities they were expected to do often they had foreign language homework, ho they spent on it and whether they generally enjoyed it.
In the final section of the questionnaire, Part I of the statements from Part B were repeated and were asked to give reasons for their agreement or disagreement with each statement. These statements are shown in Illustration A7.2.
Part D statements
I. French is one of my favourite lessons.
2. I find French more difficult than other subjects.
3. French will be useful to me after I leave school

Pupils were then asked two questions about the foreign language choices for the following year choice. This question is particularly relevant as some pupils do choose at the age of 13 whether they continue with the study of a foreign language. The second question asked

which, if any, second foreign language they would choose for the following 3. Finally, there was an invitation to express 'any thoughts or feelings' about learning French, which have not been expressed in Parts A, B and C.

A7.2 Scoring procedures

The response to each of the statements on the scale of Part B were scored 1-5, depending on the nature of the scale to which the statement contributed. For example, on the scale relating to difficulty, strong agreement with a statement saying French is easy would be scored as *5;* strong agreement with a statement suggesting it is difficult would be scored as 1. Consequently, a high score on the scale of Difficulty indicated a view that foreign language learning is easy and a low score that it is difficult. The other scales were composed of statements scored in a similar way, depending on the emphasis of the items. A high score on the scales of Usefulness or Enjoyment denoted a view that foreign language learning is useful or enjoyable and on the fourth scale, Contact with the foreign community, a high score indicated a wish for contact. For each scale, a high score indicated a positive view and a low score indicated a negative view.

A7.3 Formation of the scales

Usefulness

2. There are many more important things to learn in school than French.
4. I think my parents are pleased I'm learning French
5. I don't want to do any more French after this yeai
11. French will be useful to me after I leave school.
12. Learning French is a waste of time.
13. I would like to be able to speak several foreign languages.
14. I'd like to get a job where I could use my French.
15. I am not interested in learning foreign languages.
27. I don't need French for what I want to do.
29. I am not interested in learning about other countries.
35. French is no use to me as I don't want to go to France.

Enjoyment

1. French is one of my favourite lessons.
10. I don't like French because I'm no good at it.
14. I'd like to get a job where I could use my French.
18. I like French most of the time.
21. I like learning new words.
28. I enjoy French because it seems easy.
31. I enjoy other lessons more than French.
33. French is usually boring.

Difficulty

5. I don't want to do any more French after this year.
7. French is one of the easiest lessons.
9. I find French more difficult than other subjects.
10. I don't like French because I'm no good at it.
16. I am better at French than at other subjects.
20. French is too difficult to understand.
24. French is easy if you try.
26. I find it hard to remember the words in French.
28. I enjoy French because it seems easy.
30. I'm no good at French.
34. I'm quite good at French.

Contact with the foreign community

3. I would like to go to France.
8. I would like to stay with a French family.
17. I am not interested in going to France.
19. I think it's a good idea to have a French penfriend.
25. I would like to have a French boy or girl to stay.
32. I would like to meet some French people.
35. French is no use to me as I don't want to go to France.
36. I think it would feel strange staying with a French family.

A7.4 Reliability of the scales

The alpha coefficient statistics showing internal reliability of scales are shown below for each of the attitude scales.

Usefulness 0.89
Enjoyment 0.88
Difficulty 0.91
Contact 0.87

These figures all indicate high levels of internal consistency within the scales.